LATINAS/OS AND THE INTERNATIONAL SEX TRADE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE PERCEPTIONS OF CUSTOMERS, VICTIMS, AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the

Graduate College of Social Work

University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

Melissa I. M. Torres

May, 2015

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Abstract

The U.S. is a leading destination country for foreign-born victims of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual and labor exploitation. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 established the T-visa in order to annually certify 5,000 international victims, making them eligible for services afforded to refugees such as access to housing, medical, social, legal, and vocational services. However, the certification status and access to such services are contingent upon a victim agreeing to support investigations, testify against their trafficker, and assist with the prosecution process. Despite the estimated 17,500 international victims trafficked annually, roughly 2,300 total T-visas had been granted in the first 10 years of the TVPA. In 2005, the largest international sex trafficking case in U.S. history happened in Houston, TX. Latino traffickers forced over one hundred foreign-born Latinas into the sex trade in cantinas that cater to a Latino clientele. In U.S. cities with the highest rates of international sex trafficking, Latinas have the highest incidence and prevalence. Yet persistent gaps between estimated and actual numbers of victims identified reflect a flawed identification process. An explanation of the nuances involved in getting services to Latina victims of international sex trafficking demonstrates the different ways in which proper identification and assistance is necessary in helping to restore victims. This study explores the perceptions and experiences of international sex trafficking of Latinas as told by its various stakeholders in order to assess their impact on identifying and assisting victims. Narrative interviews were conducted with male customers who frequented cantinas where victims were rescued, law enforcement, legal, and social service providers who have identified Latina victims, and victims themselves. The dissertation is a three-manuscript dissertation and the three papers explore the disconnect all stakeholders feel about the role of men in Latino sex networks; the Experiences of Social Service Providers in Victim

Identification and Service Provision for Latinas Trafficked for Sex in Houston and Los Angeles; and Latina Victims' Experience of Sex Trafficking in Houston's Latino Sex Networks. A more comprehensive process of victim identification is necessary in the fight against human trafficking.

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"You are never strong enough that you don't need help." – César Chávez

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Dedication

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Chapter 1: Introduction - Statement of the Problem

Human trafficking, a 32 billion dollar global industry, is the exploitation of a person by the use of force, fraud, or coercion and is considered a criminal act and violation of human rights that is occurring all over the world (International Labour Office, 2008). The elements of force, fraud, or coercion are vital to the identifying a victim of human trafficking, as traffickers recruit and keep victims through the use of violence, threats, false promises, debt bondage, and other methods of manipulation and control for the purpose of exploitation (Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, or TVPA, of 2000). A person is not considered a victim if they are willingly and actively involved in the industry or exploits. The United Nations (UN) currently recognizes five forms of exploitation by human trafficking globally: sexual exploitation, exploitation of labor, baby trafficking, organ harvesting, and the recruitment and enforcement of child soldiers. Though UN estimates figure that 2.5 million men, women, and children from 127 countries are being trafficked into 137 countries every year, these numbers focus specifically on victims of the global sex and labor trades as sex and labor exploitation are the two most prevalent forms of human trafficking worldwide (United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, 2008). In the United States, anti-trafficking laws written, monitored, and enforced by the Department of State focus only on sex and labor trafficking and further distinguish between victims who are American citizens (domestic trafficking) and those who are foreign-born (international trafficking) (Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, or TVPA, of 2000). The U.S., then, recognizes domestic victims of labor trafficking, international victims of labor trafficking, domestic victims of sex trafficking, and international victims of sex trafficking.

Both the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (UN Trafficking Protocol) and the U.S. federal Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (TVPA) defined and criminalized human trafficking by evidence of force, fraud, or coercion, and both were drafted in 2000 (Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, 2000; TVPA, 2000). The United Nations continues to convene and debate on best practices and priorities on human trafficking while the TVPA has been reauthorized (Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Acts – TVPRAs of 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012) and amended four times since its inception. Thus, even with high estimates of victims, international and U.S. definitions of human trafficking and efforts to combat it are relatively new and still developing.

The U.S. is widely considered one of the leading destination countries for international victims of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual and labor exploitation (United States Department of State, 2014). Estimated numbers of international victims trafficked in the U.S. have varied since the initial TVPA first suggested 50,000 but reduced the number to 18,000 and again to 14,500 during subsequent reauthorizations of TVPRAs. Though there has since been a general consensus that the annual number of international victims to be roughly 17,500 these shifting numbers question the reliability of estimates provided by the Department of State and could potentially affect the availability of resources offered to victims of trafficking (Clawson, Layne, & Small, 2006). The Department of Justice figure of 14,500 to 17,500 international victims trafficked in the U.S. annually is most often cited though the vast majority of these victims go unidentified, with only 0.4% of the assumed number of victims of trafficking in the U.S. actually being identified (United States Department of State, 2010). These national statistics demonstrate a significant need for better victim identification processes.

At its inception, the TVPA (2000) focused solely on international victims of sex and labor trafficking, establishing the T-visa in order to annually certify 5,000 international victims as such and make them eligible for services afforded to refugee status. Domestic victims were not distinguished until the first reauthorization in 2003, making the foreign-born victim of sex and labor exploitation the longest established definition of a human trafficking victim in the United States. International victims of trafficking are a hidden and vulnerable population affected by a covert industry, yet the shifting estimates may also be dependent on the understanding of who a victim of international trafficking is, as the Department of State's estimates have changed when their amended TVPRAs were reauthorized (Clawson, Layne, & Small, 2006). The TVPRAs of 2003, 2005, 2008, 20012 have also increasingly prioritized sex trafficking over labor exploitation. Thus the Department of State's incongruous estimates of victims since inception of the TVPA may be reflective of the continuing development of these policies, as the Department of State monitors, and reports on the policies it itself enforces and reauthorizes.

The TVPA established the T-visa for international victims who have been certified by law enforcement, a judge, the Departments of State and Justice, or the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) as someone who has been forced, defrauded, or coerced into sex or labor trafficking. Once certified, the T-visa affords international victims the same services as refugee status such as access to housing, medical, social, legal, and vocational services. However, the certification, T-visa status, and access to such services are contingent upon a victim submitting "primary evidence" of their cooperation with law enforcement – meaning a victim must agree to support investigations, testify against their trafficker, and assist with the prosecution process. Though law enforcement or other social service providers, such as DHHS,

may identify a victim as such, they will not be allowed certification without agreeing to cooperate. According to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the "T Nonimmigrant Status is set aside for those who are or have been victims of human trafficking and are willing to assist law enforcement in the investigation or prosecution of acts of trafficking" while the TVPA itself "strengthens the ability of law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute human trafficking, and also offer protection to victims" (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2011). The gaps and inconsistencies between policy and the identification and certification processes become evident when looking at the numbers of issued T-visa. Despite the estimated 17,500 international victims trafficked annually, the TVPA allows for only 5,000 T-visas to be issued annually. Yet since its inception in October 2000, roughly 2,300 total T-visas had been granted through 2010 (Hepburn and Simon, 2013). This means that in the first decade of the TVPA, of the estimated 175,000 international victims in the U.S. over that time, 2,300 of them have been certified and assisted as such.

Further complicating the ability to properly identify trafficking victims is the lack of uniformity in a reporting process. The Department of State commissioned itself through the TVPA to report the number of cases of victims it has certified as such but not on its estimated numbers of potential or investigated cases. The U. S. Department of Homeland Security, Department of State, some state Offices of Attorney Generals (OAGs), some local county sheriff offices and city police departments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) all have hotlines to report potential cases of human trafficking. The National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC), a program of anti-trafficking NGO Polaris Project in Washington DC, is the most established national hotline for reporting tips, finding local anti-trafficking services and training, and answers calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. When receiving tips of

potential trafficking or crisis calls, the NHTRC will file reports with local law enforcement while documenting the calls. The reports are followed to assess which tips and crisis calls led to actual cases. During the last reauthorization, TVPRA of 2013, the Department of State established a partnership with the NHTRC and encouraged federal agencies' endorsement of its use. Therefore, the Department of State continues to report the prevalence of certified human trafficking cases in the U.S. while the NHTRC measures national human trafficking incidence rates.

As of January 2007, 25% of all certified victims of international sex trafficking were from Texas, with the majority being identified in Houston, as cases steadily increased at the same rate through 2011 – (Children at Risk, 2013). It is estimated that one out of every five international victims who are trafficked into the U.S. comes through Texas (Texas Office of the Attorney General, 2011). As of December 2012, the states with the highest incidence of human trafficking are Texas and California, which have regularly fluctuated between the top two spots since the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) began analyzing reports in 2009 (National Human Trafficking Resource Center, 2015). While the majority of states averaged 150 calls to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center in 2012, Texas and California totaled 1,900 and 2,055 calls respectively (Polaris Project, 2013). Most calls in both states were made in English (1,439 in Texas and 1,815 in California) with the second most used call language being Spanish (419 in Texas and 175 in California). Of the total crisis calls, possible sex trafficking was reported three times as much as labor trafficking. The confirmed reports totaled 94 investigated cases of sex trafficking in Texas and 162 investigated cases of sex trafficking in California (Polaris Project, 2011; Polaris Project, 2013). The vast majority of these calls and eventual cases occurred in Houston and Los Angeles, as has consistently been the case

since the inception of the NHTRC hotline (Polaris Project, 2013). The majority of sex trafficking cases in both states were overwhelmingly reported as "pimp" cases, in which the victim and their sex acts were considered to be controlled and negotiated by another person. This is subject to the perception of the caller. However, second to pimp cases were "*cantina*" – working class neighborhood bars that mostly employ undocumented women and cater to Latino men (Fernandez-Esquer & Agoff, 2012) – "commercial-front brothel," and "residential brothel" cases. The NHTRC categorizes these types as one of the most common international sex trafficking networks in the U.S., deeming them "'closed networks' for only Latino men as 'johns' (male consumers of commercial sex) where the victims are almost always women and children from Latin America (Polaris Project, 2011; Polaris Project, 2013). In 2012, this "closed network" type accounted for a total of 12 investigated cases in Texas and 7 in California. Therefore, of the total sex trafficking cases in Texas (94) and California (162), including domestic sex trafficking, the majority of victims were perceived as pimp cases (these were not distinguished between domestic or international sex trafficking cases), while the second highest amount were considered Latin American (international) sex trafficking networks.

Though not all callers identified their role or identities (most being listed as "unknown"), the majority of crisis calls in both states came from the general public, social and medical service providers, and the victims themselves – all reporting indications of human trafficking. The Department of Justice (responsible for the Office of Victims of Crime) and other government agencies involved in anti-trafficking measures reported the least. Both Texas and California had comparatively high numbers of "possible johns" (male consumers of commercial sex) calling in to report indications sex trafficking, with Texas having twice as many consumer calls than California (Polaris Project, 2013). According to the National Human Trafficking Resource

Center, 2,713 (12.7%) of "substantive calls" to the national hotline came from possible victims while 115 (0.5%) came from buyers of commercial sex (National Human Trafficking Resource Center, 2015).

A key impetus for this study is based on cases in Houston, Texas, where *cantinas* are prevalent. In 2008, the Houston Police Department received a call from a Latina victims regarding sex trafficking happening in a local cantina. She was able to make the call after confiding in a Latino consumer who then lent her his cell phone and taught her how to call the authorities (Olsen, 2008). The consumer and victim were both Latin and spoke Spanish: When the customer was made aware by the client that she was not a willing prostitute, he assisted her. Similar situations have occurred in other cases in Houston in 2011 where the traffickers, victims, and consumers were all from Latin America (or of Hispanic descent), the sex acts occurred at local *cantinas*, and law enforcement were notified by Latina victims who were assisted by Latino consumers (Olsen, 2008; Olsen, 2011). As of January 2013, many of the women rescued from these cases in Houston are still undergoing the TVPA process of being certified, receiving services, and awaiting prosecution of their traffickers.

As shown by the calls and cases reported by the NHTRC, Houston and Los Angeles are prime locations for human trafficking and, thus, vulnerable to higher prevalence of international sex trafficking cases similar to the Houston *cantina* cases. The largest international sex trafficking case in the U.S. was made possible in Houston due to the many different cultures and ethnicities represented in the city and its close proximity to the U.S./Mexico border, both of which enable the international trafficking victims and their traffickers from Latin America to blend into the community (Texas Office of the Attorney General, 2011). Along with the abundance of modes of transportation of international victims such as the Port of Houston, an

international and a domestic airport, various bus companies, train stations, and interstates, the U.S. Department of Justice identified the I-10 corridor as one of the main routes utilized by traffickers in the United States, making Houston even more vulnerable to this blight (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006). One of the reasons behind the Department of Justice's monitoring of I-10 is its access to California, which mirrors Houston in terms of these vulnerabilities identified by the Department of Justice. Both cities have large and established Latin enclaves, close proximity to the U.S./Mexico border, and access to the I-10 corridor.

Realizing the high prevalence and incidence rates, the Offices of the Attorney General (OAG) in Texas and California have created human trafficking task forces. Both OAG task forces state in their most recent (Texas Office of the Attorney General, 2012; California Department of Justice, 2012) reports on human trafficking that their prevention, prosecution, and public education efforts focus on what is deemed "the demand for victims of trafficking." Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott states that the "callous truth is that human trafficking is largely driven by the principles of supply and demand," (Texas Office of the Attorney General, 2012, pg. 7) while California Attorney General Kamala D. Harris states that to "create a future without human trafficking in California and across the world requires [. . .] targeted efforts to address the demand" (California Department of Justice, 2012, pg. 11). The supply and demand language that has become commonplace in anti-trafficking efforts is not based on the economic model used to determine product cost, but rather on a theory posed by women's studies professor Donna M. Hughes. While Hughes had publicly used the supply and demand language as early as 1999, she later developed a theory and model which she says explains the growth of the industry: In her words, "men create the demand, women are the supply (Hughes, 2000). This theory has become the reasoning behind anti-trafficking policies and efforts in the U.S. and worldwide, due largely

to Hughes, a consultant to the Department of State, submitting a report on anti-trafficking policy entitled, "Best practices to address the demand side of sex trafficking" (Hughes, 2004). This report to the Department of State listed three components that Hughes initially stated create the growth of the sex trafficking industry; the men are the consumers who demand sex acts for purchase, the traffickers are the profiteers who exploit women to meet the demand, and the culture that normalizes prostitution and allows men to purchase sex acts create a lax market for the industry to thrive (Hughes, 2004). The following year, Hughes submitted another report which was funded by the Department of State entitled "The demand for victims of sex trafficking" (Hughes, 2005), where the developed theory and model in use today were first published. In the final version of Hughes's model, a fourth component is added to explain the growth of the sex trafficking industry; the state which passively contributes to the demand by not properly regulating prostitution or prosecuting the consumers (Hughes, 2005). In this dissertation, I will explain Hughes's supply and demand theory in detail in order to determine how this guide for current anti-trafficking policies and efforts falls short in addressing the high number of victims we have seen go unidentified. The theory and the current prosecution-focused policies (TVPA/TVPRAs) it has guided lack an integral part of the sex trafficking industry which is the victims themselves. Hughes theorizes supply and demand without addressing or defining the "supply." Anti-trafficking efforts, thus, remain prosecution-focused on the "demand," but do not properly address or consider who the victims ("supply") are.

For the past decade, campaigns based on a theory which has several gaps have been successful in influencing anti-trafficking policy and efforts. Both international and American organizations use "Stop the Demand" as their anti-trafficking slogan while government officials are guided by it in prioritizing their anti-trafficking policies (Musto, 2008). Yet Hughes's Supply

and Demand theory is not comprehensive, as it only considers the demand side of a global process in attempts to explain a multi-faceted problem. By omitting the "supply" (victims) from the theory, the problem is not conclusively defined and may therefore contribute to the low number of victims who have actually been identified and certified for services. Specifically for Latina victims of international sex trafficking, factors such as immigration status and fear of deportation, language barriers, shame of being perceived as a willing prostitute, possible threats to their families in Latin America, and a lacking trust of law enforcement further compound the possibility of a victim resisting to testify against her trafficker and increase her risk of being deported back to the location she was first brought into the sex trade. (Chapkis, 2003; Haynes, 2004; Hodge & Lietz, 2007; Garza, 2011). Efforts to combat international sex trafficking face such inherent problems with victim identification; with prostitution itself being a criminal act in most of the U.S. and the high prevalence of these victims being undocumented, victims are too close to the problem and face high risks for self-reporting. With the burden of proof placed on the victim, completely omitting these structural risks from a prosecution-focused theory narrows the focus of a complicated process and hinders its own purpose by relying on victims that encounter unacknowledged yet deeply challenging factors.

Hughes's theory is not meant to address how to properly identify victims of sex trafficking, but rather how to identify what causes the large estimates of victims. In doing so, the focus has shifted to blaming and targeting at the expense of the victims who were never properly defined to begin with. This is reflective of another gap in the model, which are the assumptions it makes in categorizing the different roles. Anti-trafficking policies following this model would assume that all men who purchase sex acts are so demanding of it that they will purchase victims of sex trafficking and that the state fails victims of trafficking by tolerating or legalizing

prostitution. By conflating prostitution with sex trafficking, the continuous problem of not properly defining the victim is exacerbated while categorization of the men and the state assumes that these roles could only be detrimental for victims. However, reflecting the callers to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, and as shown in the Houston *cantina* cases, properly identifying international sex trafficking of Latinas often requires the involvement of multiple parties (National Human Trafficking Resource Center, 2015). The process of identifying potential international sex trafficking and investigating whether it differs from a prostitution case involves the suspicion and reporting from a community member (possibly, as in Houston, the men purchasing the sex) or law enforcement, then the involvement of law enforcement and the service providers assisting potential victims in investigating the case. Yet these roles of men as tipsters or those representing the state (law enforcement, service providers) as collaborators in identifying victims are not included in Hughes's model. To assume that all men, once made aware that the woman they are buying sex from is not a willing sex prostitute, would not help identify her to the authorities limits us from utilizing a resource that has proven vital in identifying and assisting Latina victims of international sex trafficking. Along the same lines, ignoring the role(s) of the state as collaborators in the process of properly identifying victims of international sex trafficking limits the system from including others in the burden of proof and better assisting said victims with the services they need. Though removed from the Hughes model, the NHTRC calls and Houston *cantina* cases have also shown that victims themselves are willing to self-report to law enforcement (National Human Trafficking Resource Center, 2015; Olsen, 2008) – though this differs from testifying against their trafficker later in the process.

Current "stop the demand" efforts in Texas and California target men as consumers by establishing "john schools" (classes that teach first time offenders of sex solicitation that prostitution is demeaning to women), criminalization (increased penalties for purchasing sex such as longer sentences and registering as a sex offender), and, at times, public shaming (such as posting mug shots of sex solicitors on billboards or websites), which all single out the men as perpetrators (Berger, 2012; Bernstein, 2010; Soderlund, 2005; Yen, 2008). These methods target men as perpetrators of sex trafficking by reprimanding them for soliciting prostitution based on the theory that eliminating the demanding consumers will halt the distribution of the supply of sex trafficking victims. The problem this creates for the process of identifying a sex trafficking victim, however, is in the fact that what is being addressed here is prostitution. Targeting men who solicit prostitutes and deeming them the perpetrators of sex trafficking conflates prostitution with sex trafficking as Hughes's theory does. This is problematic for victim identification as the U.S. and state legal definitions for prostitution and sex trafficking are differentiated by the willingness of the person engaging in commercial sex acts. This problematic conflation is nothing new, as defining prostitution (willing or not) has, for centuries, been influenced by moral assumptions of a woman's married, social, and economic status and these competing assumptions have allowed for legislations to pass without an agreed upon definition of the acts they regulate (McGinn, 1997). In the case of Hughes's theory, the demand for these acts does not discriminate between willing prostitution and sex trafficking.

There are many factors to consider in how to properly address identifying victims and balance the focus between their protection and prosecution of their traffickers. The calls to the NHTRC and the *cantina* cases in Houston exemplify both the nuances in the different sex trafficking networks and the various roles Hughes's "components" could play in victim

identification. For example, in situations and establishments where both the international sex trafficking victims and the consumers are both Latina/o, common language or cultural barriers to international victim identification are not necessarily present. Hughes herself has stated that the consumers and sex workers (possible sex trafficking victims) in im/migrant communities more often than not share the same nationality and/or ethnicity because the men prefer a woman from their native country or culture (Raymond & Hughes, 2001). Environments and cases such as these raise several questions: For the male consumer, does the knowledge of the potential for sex trafficking affect choices when buying sex from Latinas and would it influence how he responds? For the female victim of international sex trafficking, what would cause her to divulge her situation to the man she is forced to have sex with and what assistance does she hope for in doing so? For those responding to the case in roles of law enforcement and victim services, what best helps them identify victims of international sex trafficking and how do the developing polices affect the process?

Innovation

The considerable gaps between estimated victims of international trafficking in the U.S, the number of T-visas allowed each year, and the actual amount of victims that are identified then certified reflect a flawed system. Current anti-trafficking policies, campaigns, and efforts are falling short somewhere in the process of properly identifying and assisting victims of international human trafficking. The rescue and provision of social, medical, and mental health services to victims of human trafficking depends greatly on first identifying the victim as such by proving they were forced, defrauded, or coerced into exploitation. A foreign-born person who has been trafficked in the U.S. must first be identified and/or reported as a trafficking victim then agree to assist in the prosecution of their trafficker in order to legally obtain certified status and

access to refugee-type services provided by federal and (some) state governments. If a victim is not identified or refuses to take part in the prosecution process, they run the risk of being labeled a rape victim, victim of domestic violence, or criminalized as a willing prostitute, or an undocumented immigrant and face deportation (Miller & Wasileski, 2011). The literature highlights proper victim identification as a major issue in closing the gap between the estimated number of victims and those who have actually been rescued and/or certified (Hodge & Lietz, 2007; Miller & Wasileski, 2011; Samarasinghe & Burton, 2007).

Hughes's Supply and Demand theorizes that four components contribute to these high numbers and the overall growth of the sex trafficking industry. The model categorizes the components as follows:

1) The Men are the consumers of sex acts and create the demand;
2) The Exploiters are the traffickers who exploit victims in order to meet the demand;
3) The State contributes to the demand by not properly regulating prostitution;
4) The Culture, particularly media, normalizes and glamorizes prostitution (Hughes, 2005).

Exploring these components is essential in identifying sex trafficking. A person who exploits others by force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of sex is definitively a sex trafficker (TVPA, 2000) and this definition of the culture in regards to sex trafficking is subjective. Since access to traffickers is highly dangerous and exploring a blanketed assumption of a global culture's role in sex trafficking would prove near impossible, this dissertation will focus on two of these sex trafficking components – namely the Men (consumers) and the State (those acting on the policies) – and include a fifth component, the Supply (the victims). I, therefore, propose an amendment to the model by inclusion of the supply and reframing it to focus on victim

identification. By including the victims, we can not only gain better understanding into how they are involved (forced, defrauded, or coerced) in the growing sex trade, but work towards empowering them in their own identification processes.

Research Questions and Aims

The purpose of this dissertation and its enclosed articles is to gain a richer, deeper understanding of the process of identifying Latina victims of international sex trafficking, focusing on two of the largest Latin communities which also have the highest incidences of international sex trafficking in the U.S.: Houston, Texas and Los Angeles, California. The broad research questions guiding the overall study and its three articles are:

1) What are the perspectives on international sex trafficking of Latinas as told by the consumers, service providers, and victims themselves?
2) How could these experiences affect the identification and certification processes?

In studying these men's experiences, the researcher aims to:

a. Explore the perceptions and attitudes of the sex trade among Latino consumers of prostitution in Latin communities and networks;
b. Assess their knowledge of sex trafficking, including how to identify a victim, and anti-trafficking efforts;
c. Explore whether or not being aware of international sex trafficking would affect their sex purchasing behaviors with Latinas and/or motivate them to assist victims.

In studying service providers' experiences, the researcher aims to:

a. Explore different roles in working to identify, certify, and assist Latina victims of international sex trafficking;
b. Determine how current policies affect (help or hinder) these roles;
c. Assess if uniformity across the different roles can be achieved in creating a comprehensive process of victim identification and certification.

In studying the victims' experiences, the researcher aims to:

a. Explore how Latinas become victims of international sex trafficking;
b. Describe the identification and certification processes through the perspective of the victim;
c. Assess the roles involved in successful victim identification, certification, and rehabilitative processes through the experiences of these certified Latina victims.

This study will qualitatively explore how these three roles play into the process of identifying Latina victims of international sex trafficking in Houston and Los Angeles. By exploring three different roles and experiences involved in the sex trade, it is the goal of the researcher to assess and describe the varied and conceivable roles of all involved in the process of victim identification. The data obtained from this study seeks to reframe the prosecution-focused efforts by informing prevention interventions, service provider trainings, and anti-human trafficking policies which aim to identify and assist Latina victims of international sex trafficking.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Much of the literature on international sex trafficking tends to focus on the trends of trafficking trends and prosecution policies. Focusing on cessation of the problem without properly defining the problem itself risks being ineffective. Namely, if proper identification of victims is necessary in containing the problem, then a better understanding of the nuances and processes that encourage or hinder victim identification must become part of the framework. This is especially relevant to social workers in practice and policy since we often work with oppressed and marginalized populations and are included in the state/service providing component of the model.

As previously outlined, the process of identifying victims of international sex trafficking is itself cumbersome and requires the involvement of numerous participants. One factor in properly identifying victims would be the consideration of cultural and local aspects that interplay in the participants' (the men, the state/service providers, and the victims themselves) decision-making process when international sex trafficking is suspected.

Trafficking and the U.S./Mexico Border

Both Houston and Los Angeles are considered gateways to Latin America and leading hubs for Latin sex trafficking networks in the United States (National Human Trafficking Resource Center, 2015). Hughes has stated that international sex trafficking thrives in im/migrant communities such as these because the men prefer purchasing sex from women of their shared heritage or native country (Raymond & Hughes, 2001). Therefore, the relationship between the U.S./Mexico border and international sex trafficking of Latina/os in the U.S. should be considered in determining not only what factors contribute to properly identifying these victims

but how (if at all) shared language, nationality, and culture factor into victim identification as Hughes suggests.

The U.S. Department of State's annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report utilizes a ranking system of countries' efforts to combat human trafficking based on their adherence to the U.S. TVPA standards (U.S. Department of State, 2010). Countries are categorized as either a 1) source country, which means their nationals are at increased risk of being trafficked internationally; 2) transit country, which is considered a country that victims are moved through in order to get to the; 3) destination country, which are considered to have the highest demand for victims. (U.S. Department of State, 2015). Countries are then designated one of the following "tiers,": Tier 1 countries are considered to be doing the utmost in combative efforts in compliance with the TVPA; Tier 2 countries have not fully complied but have made efforts or improvements; Tier 2-Watch List countries are the same as Tier 2, but have not shown progress in complying with the TVPA within a two year period; and Tier 3 countries make little to no effort to combat trafficking in their country in accordance with the TVPA. Currently ranked at Tier 2, Mexico is categorized as a source, transit, and destination country for victims of human trafficking and is the single-largest source country of undocumented immigrants entering the U.S. (U.S. Department of State, 2011).

An estimated one third of the people trafficked into the U.S. annually come from Latin America, with the majority of them entering by way of Mexico (Texas Office of the Attorney General, 2011) while immigration from, specifically, Central America to the U.S. by way of Mexico has increased over the past decade (Alba, 2013). Victims of sex trafficking are highly vulnerable along the U.S./Mexico border due to the high rates of unemployment, thousands of annual American tourists entering Mexico for the purpose of purchasing sex (in red light districts

popular in Tijuana and Juarez), and the increased violence along the border (Ugarte, Zarate, & Farley, 2003; Albuja, 2014). Since the government-implemented drug war in Mexico commenced in 2006, an estimated 50,000 people have been killed as violence in Mexico has reached crisis levels (Albuja, 2014) and incidence of human trafficking in Mexico has increased as drug cartels have become involved in addition to drug and arms trafficking (Albuja, 2014; Guinn, 2008). Thus the risks for Mexican and Latin American immigrants entering the U.S. continues to increase as Mexico and its neighboring countries suffer from Mexico's nationwide state of emergency (Albuja, 2014). Deeply rooted and centuries old gender inequalities affecting education and employment opportunities, along with a weakened legal state in Mexico only exacerbate these vulnerabilities faced by Latinas who are from or immigrating through Mexico (Risley, 2010).

Factors Affecting Identification of Latina Sex Trafficking Victims

This dissertation focuses specifically on the immigrant Latin population and culture within the hidden phenomenon of international sex trafficking. Considering the high incidence of Latin sex trafficking networks – categorized by the Polaris Project as closed networks targeting Latino consumers and trafficking Latina women in *cantinas*, commercial-front brothels, or residential brothels in Latin enclaves – in Houston and Los Angeles (Polaris Project, 2011), factors specific to these environments, populations, and situations will be explored. Gaining insight into the nuances specific to the Latin sex trafficking networks will help the participants who come in contact with these victims properly identify them as such. Since Hughes suggests that men in these communities prefer purchasing sex from women of their shared culture (Raymond & Hughes, 2001) and the Houston *cantina* cases assumes many of the consumers, like the victims, were both Latin and spoke Spanish (Olsen, 2008; Olsen, 2011), the setting should be

explored to determine how it factors into the identification or misidentification of Latina international sex trafficking victims.

Because this dissertation aims to include the victims as a component in international sex trafficking and explore their role in the victim identification process, defining and identifying these Latina victims should be determined in order to consider the factors affecting them. Based on the TVPA, the legal definition of a Latina international sex trafficking victim would be a foreign-born woman from Latin America that has been exploited for sexual purposes by the use of force, fraud, or coercion in the United States. As with most female victims of international trafficking, Latina victims are targeted for their vulnerabilities that will make them easily forced, defrauded, or coerced into exploitation (Hodge & Lietz, 2007; Hughes, 2005). The phenomenon of cumulative vulnerability (Herrera, Rajsbaum, Agoff & Franco, 2006) states that such women are vulnerable on account of their gender, which is compounded by poverty, and discrimination (even if it is perceived). Latina victims of international sex trafficking are, then, entered into the industry because of these vulnerabilities (Busch-Armendariz, Nsonwu & Heffron, 2011; Risley, 2010; Herrera, Rajsbaum, Agoff & Franco, 2006). Yet this same cumulative vulnerability can keep them in their forced situation, further hindering victim identification, since migrant women are often further challenged with a lack of social resources, no citizenship rights, and develop coping strategies to help them tolerate survival sex (Herrera, Rajsbaum, Agoff & Franco, 2006; Simkhada, 2008). *Cantineras,* the migrant women working at *cantinas* as waitresses/hostesses and are paid to sleep and drink with men, defy tradition and face a unique stigma that complicates distinguishing between the women who are working willingly and those being trafficked. A study on *cantineras* in Houston by Fernandez-Esquer and Agoff (2012) explored

the threat of stigma in misrecognition of women paid to drink with the men and willing prostitutes (trafficked women were not included in distinction). The researchers state:

> "Women who perceive themselves as socially stigmatized may be less able to protect themselves, particularly when self-protection necessitates actions that further compromise them socially. . . . *Cantineras* are marginalized because they violate Latino gender norms expecting women to be abstemious and avoid fraternizing with men in sexualized settings like bars. These practices engender the perception in the community that *cantineras* are prostitutes, an attitude often shared by the customers they drink with. In fact, this perception is partially validated by the reality that because the social and economic resources of these undocumented women are severely restricted, some *cantineras,* some of the time, do accept money for sex with bar customers to supplement their incomes." (Fernandez-Esquer & Agoft, 2012).

Taking this thought further by distinguishing between a willing prostitute and a sex trafficking victim, this cultural construct poses a challenge to Hughes's blanketed supply and demand theory which assumes that these men conflate willing prostitutes with trafficked victims. If there is a partially validated perception in these Latin-serving environments that the women are willingly selling sex at *cantinas* out of a need for income rather than force, it is worth considering how the cultural perception could change once the man is aware that this stigmatized sexuality is not her choice. Again, Hughes's theory never properly identifies the victim or defines the "supply." Yet by assuming that the men fully objectify women for sex regardless of volition (Hughes, 2004; 2005) removes cultural and individual nuances that could distinguish between a *cantinera* who is choosing to work as a drinking companion, willing to prostitute for added income, and a victim

who has been trafficked for sex in an environment that would validate a Latino's misguided cultural assumption.

In these environments where women are willingly or forcefully sexualized for business, it is legally necessary for the women to be distinguished between willing prostitute and sex trafficking victim for them to be properly identified. The business theory of commoditization describes the process in which consumers do not distinguish between goods that are given an economic value based on varying attributes – the consumer sees them as mere products for sale. This business theory has since been applied to anthropological and political theory, sometimes by the name "commodification," to describe a similar consumer mindset when it comes to placing value on something that would not inherently be considered a product such as a service, labor, or labor. Commodification, according to Marx, is at its worse when indiscriminate consumers do not place the value on the service a person provides, but on the person themselves. These perceptions in business environments which assume that commodified services or people are for sale, could explain the assumption that men conflate sex trafficking victims (person as commodity) with willing prostitutes (sex as commodity) – as they have been found to conflate a working *cantinera* selling drinks with those selling sex acts based on a cultural construct.

Sex-purchasing Behavior of Men

Similar to the moral language we've seen, there is a paradox in Latin culture that punishes female sexual behavior while permitting male promiscuity (Bliss, 2001). However, this, Latin paradox assumes that the female sexual behavior is the woman's choice. Exploring whether the cultural perception would change if her sexual behavior is revealed to be forced is critical in assessing how men's sex purchasing decisions are made in *cantinas* and determining

their role in victim identification. In Costa Rica, where prostitution is legalized, law enforcement have focused on the illegal sex trafficking of children by sanctioning traffickers suspected of passing young girls as willing prostitutes (Guinn, 2008). As prostitution and the purchasing of sex is decriminalized, the prosecution focus is on the trafficker. Therefore efforts have been undertaken to inform the consumers of the risk of purchasing a trafficked (child) victim and inviting men to report suspected sex trafficking of children (Guinn, 2008). This method challenges Hughes's theory by exemplifying the possibility of men being involved in identifying victims and reveals another gap in the theory by showing that neither legalizing or criminalizing (prostitution and child sex trafficking, respectively) commercial sex acts ends the demand, since the demand is not specific to one type of victim (Guinn, 2008). The theory, then, not only omits the victim, fails to define who a victim is, but disregards victims as indistinguishable.

Business and marketing researchers have been privy to the influence of cultural constructs and individual nuances in response to commoditization. Businesses have learned to market to the discriminating consumer in hopes that they become repeat and loyal consumers of their product. One tool being used to answer why consumers choose to buy what they buy and how is the Values Theory. Social psychologist Shalom H. Schwartz determined that there are ten motivationally distinct types of values which explain individual decisions and cultural behavior; Power, Achievement, Hedonism, Stimulation, Self-direction, Universalism, Benevolence, Tradition, Conformity, and Security (Schwartz, 1994). These 10 value types are then categorized into four groups, called motivations, which are theorized to guide decision making and behavior. The four motivations and their respective value types are: Conservation, guided by how safe one feels (Security, Tradition, Conformity); Self-enhancement, guided by how good one feels about oneself (Achievement, Power, Hedonism); Self-transcendence, guided by how one relates to

others (Universalism, Benevolence); Openness to change, guided by independent goals (Stimulation, Self-direction, Hedonism) (Schwartz, 1992). This organization of values which guide decision-making and behavior is known as the Values Theory and is applied in marketing and business research over the last decade (Krystallis, Vassallo, & Chryssochoidis, 2012). On an individual level, the relations among these value types "reflect the psychological dynamics of conflict and compatibility that individuals experience" in the course of daily decision making, including consumer decisions (Schwartz, 1994; Krystallis et al, 2012). Business and marketing researchers have been investigating the importance of values in purchasing and selection behavior among consumers of goods (Dickson & Ginter, 1987; Dreezens, Martijn, Tenbult, Kok & de Vries, 2005) and services (Caprara, Schwartz, Capanna, Vecchione, & Barbaranelli, 2006; Fegg, Wasner, Neudert, & Borasio, 2005) in order to assess predictors of consumer attitudes, decisions, and behaviors (Dickson & Ginter, 1987). Since values are considered stable guiding constructs not easily changed, (Krystallis et. al, 2012) common values are used to explain and address cultural constructs, which Schwartz defines as shared values (2012), and behaviors among consumers by marketers (Krystallis et. al, 2012).

Reflecting on Values Theory in consumer purchasing decisions and behavior, Hughes's theory stating that men consume sex and demand a supply of women (Hughes, 2004) and the categorization of men as consumers would make an argument to further explore what guides men's sex purchasing behaviors. Since these values motivate consumers to make purchases based on how much a product makes them feel safe, good about themselves, how much they relate to it (or its message), or how it helps them obtain an independent goal, these values – and, in the case of culture, shared values – would help explain the men's perceptions regarding from whom they buy sex. If men choose to buy sex from Latinas, is it because they feel safe with a

shared culture (as Hughes has inadvertently suggested), because they relate to them, or because their physical preference of Latinas stimulates self-enhancement through hedonistic pleasure? Exploring the men's values in decision making as consumers would explain whether men would be motivated to engage in the process of victim identification. According to Hughes's theory, the consumers are not only removed from the process, but criminalized, and blamed for sex trafficking entirely (Berger, 2012; Hughes, 2004; Hughes, 2005; Keren-Paz & Levenkron, 2009; Samarasinghe, 2009; Weitzer, 2007; Yen, 2008). This moralization which conflates willing prostitution with victims of sex trafficking, which Hughes's theory and current legislation do, not only misidentifies the victim but now criminalizes participants that could share the burden of proof in prosecution (Weitzer, 2007; Samarasinghe, 2009; Musto, 2008). As shown by the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (2015), calls where "possible johns" were reporting trafficking in Texas and California, and the Houston *cantina* cases, we've seen that some consumers would identify and report victims of sex trafficking. Exploring their motivation to do so is vital in assessing what factors play into their role as consumers and whether these men are a disregarded resource in the cumbersome process of victim identification as they access they have to victims, the traffickers, and the trafficking operations within the cantinas is unequivocal. It is worth determining if men could assist with the burden of proof currently placed on victims by participating in investigations and prosecution rather than being blamed for the industry.

Social Service Providers' Interaction with Latina Victims

The roles of law enforcement and service providers in the victim identification process are critical as law enforcement and others investigating these networks are considered first-responders and service providers (health, mental health, social service professionals) have contact with this vulnerable and hidden population at a crucial time (Isaac, Solak, & Giardino,

2011). Law enforcement agencies are the first to confront victims in response to illicit activity such as prostitution, drug dealing, or gambling that may be suspected in *cantinas*, but it cannot be assumed that all law enforcement working on such investigations are understand what the definition of a trafficking victim is or how to properly identify them. Though all fifty states now have anti-trafficking legislation, not all legislate mandatory training of law enforcement or social and medical service providers while states which do are not uniform in delegating what training is offered and by whom. Texas and California both have human trafficking task forces which include law enforcement agencies and are overseen by their Offices of the Attorneys General (OAG), yet the it is not clear about who can deliver training and what definition is approved for statewide distribution (Texas Office of the Attorney General, 2012; California Department of Justice, 2012). As previously mentioned, both Texas and California OAGs adhere to the stop the demand campaign and, therefore, more than likely conflate prostitution with sex trafficking victims, further impeding their definition of an international sex trafficking victim. Since the passing of the TVPA, cases examined for indications of trafficking showed that charges such as importing aliens for illegal purposes, committing visa fraud, transporting women and minors for prostitution, and soliciting and compelling prostitution were common charges (Hodge & Lietz, 2004). Social and medical service providers, on the other hand, may not have access to the victims within their environment but studies have estimate that 28% of victims of trafficking came into contact with service providers at least once during their captivity, making them one of the few groups of professionals able to access victims (Isaac et al, 2011). Like law enforcement, social and service providers who lack training also run the risk of misidentifying trafficking victims otherwise identifying them as rape victims, willing prostitutes, or domestic violence victims and, for Latinas and other international victims, struggling immigrants seeking other

income (Isaac et al, 2011; Haynes, 2004; Garza, 2011; Barrows & Finger, 2008). Factoring culture, a government study in England found that trained social workers working with immigrant populations had suspicions of sexual exploitation and control but did not report or identify the victims for fear of appearing culturally insensitive (Ministry of Justice, 2009).

Alternately, law enforcement and service providers who not only are trained but work closely with victims in the identification and/or certification processes face differing factors in proper identification. Latina sex trafficking victims suffer from trauma, shame of being perceived as a prostitute, and fear of deportation or risking the safety of their families (Haynes, 2004; Garza, 2011). Cumulative vulnerabilities and cultural constructs could keep victims silent and hesitant to trust those involved in the investigative and rehabilitative processes (Herrera, Raisbaum, Agoff & Franco, 2006; Barrows & Finger, 2008; Haynes, 2004). Having a uniform understanding and definition of a sex trafficking victim among law enforcement and service providers could help to develop conclusive evidence of the victims' trafficking (Haynes, 2004), and should also be considered in relieving the burden of proof for those victims who face these challenging factors which keep them from cooperating. Law enforcement and social providers, representing the state and policies which determine victim assistance, could face such impasses – they may themselves be certain that they are dealing with an international sex trafficking victim, but cannot assist them or arraign their trafficker without the victim testifying.

Latina Victims and the Burden of Proof

This punitive process is reflective of the welfare economics model wherein a competing economy is measured by desirable and efficient productive factors which establishes and defines human welfare (Worland, 2005). The measure of a person's worth or contribution is value ridden

and measured against the greater economy so that worth is equally distributed (Edgren, 1995). Therefore, if a person is not contributing – for whatever reason – the worth placed on their contribution is decreased as is their desirability. Similar to the current welfare system in the U.S., the TVPA's prosecution-focused restrictions on and expectations of victims subjects them to measuring their worth or contribution. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services state that the Nonimmigrant status T-visa issued to certified victims is identical to refugee status, yet applicants who are "of special humanitarian concern to the U.S." are told to demonstrate persecution – not prove it – to be considered for approval and services (USCIS, 2011). What's more, the process could involve testimony from others on behalf of the applicant. Even if the status is identical, one group (refugees) is valued as a special concern to the U.S. while the other (trafficking victims) must prove their productive factor in the U.S. prosecution process. Law enforcement and service providers working with international sex trafficking victims are hindered by this system that devalues victims based on their hesitation to cooperate and testify. Anti-trafficking efforts that adopt welfare approaches are inadequate since the value of the victim does not allow for their empowerment, which is important for "women in the migration process and skill development in community reintegration" (Simkhada, 2008).

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Based on the gaps in estimated victims of international trafficking and those actually identified, this dissertation supposes that proper identification is critical in dealing with the issue and assisting more victims. Because current legislation is prosecution-focused and reflective of Hughes's supply and demand theory, I propose a reframing of the Hughes model to focus on identification of sex trafficking victims (specific to this study, international Latinas) rather than blame for the demand of prostitution and amend the model to include victims themselves. By

gaining first hand perspectives from the different actors involved in sex trafficking – the men who purchase sex, those who work to identify and certify victims, and the victims themselves – it is possible to acquire information that could better inform policies and services. Because Hughes's demand model is globally accepted as the hallmark for anti-trafficking initiatives, I will keep Hughes's terminology of "supply," "demand," "consumers," and "the state/regulators" to relate her components of the sex trafficking industry to the key players whose roles in victim identification will be explored. Hughes states that, as an industry, sex trafficking should be approached as a business (Hughes, 2004). In keeping with this model, I relate economic theories to all three components of this study while suggesting a secondary theory for the victims.

This dissertation focuses on two components from Hughes's existing model – The Men as Consumers and Social Service Providers as the State, or actors of its policies. As the Hughes model fails to include the "supply," I propose an additional component – The Victims as the Supply. Therefore, in efforts of reframing Hughes's demand/prosecution-focused theory of supply and demand to a comprehensive model, the conceptual framework and theories for this dissertation will be the following:

Hughes's Existing Supply & Demand Components:

The Men as Consumers: Values Theory, Business Model

Service Providers as the State: Welfare Economics

Proposed Component to Model:

The Victims as Supply: Commoditization Theory; Empowerment Theory

These three components will each be studied, comprising the overall research, and each study will serve as an article as this will be a manuscript dissertation. The broad research questions guiding all three articles are: 1) What are the perspectives on international sex trafficking of Latinas as told by the consumers, service providers, and victims themselves, and; 2) How could these experiences affect the identification and certification processes?

The Men/Consumers will be the focus of the first article. Latino men's role in the sex trade and their perceptions of prostitution, sex purchasing behavior, and knowledge of sex trafficking will be explored. The will help in determining whether or not men would participate in identifying victims and, if they would, if they would know how to do so. The theory that drives this study is Values Theory, currently applied to business and marketing research of consumers' purchasing decisions and behaviors.

Service Providers/the State are the focus of the second article. As Hughes posits that the State is who regulates the system of prosecution, the experiences of law enforcement, social and medical service providers will be explored in order to determine which policies help and which hinder their roles in both identifying victims and assisting those who are issued certified status. These perspectives may contribute to creating uniformity among the many roles involved in identification, reporting, investigating, and servicing of sex trafficking victims. The theory that drives this study is the model of welfare economics. This is a branch of economics that determines the value and worth of one's contribution to the greater economy, regardless of subjectivity. As these service providers ultimately work to determine which victims are issued T-visas, this application could highlight the flaws in current policies.

The Victims/Supply comprises both the proposed additional component of the supply and demand model and is the focus of the third article. The experience and perspectives of their own identification and certification processes will be explored to provide information on the "supply" side. Having been omitted from Hughes's supply and demand model, lacking a definition, and being conflated with the legally antithetical willing prostitute, including their experience of how they became involved in the industry, their identification, and rehabilitation could help better define who international sex trafficking victims – in this case, Latinas – are. The theory that drives this study is the economic theory of commoditization, which is the process in which things that do not inherently have a price value (products) are given a value and, therefore, become common products. This can apply to services or labors and, in the worst case, the person rather than their service is commodified. Since international sex trafficking victims must prove that they were forced, defrauded, or coerced for sexual exploitation, they are legally distinguished from willing prostitution, which is the difference between placing their value on their own sex acts and having a value placed on them.

Victims play a role in their own identification and certification, but learning of their experience may also demonstrate what their role is moving forward. What differentiates the victims from the economic theory of commoditization is the possibility of being identified as a victim. At this point, the "product" or "supply" can speak for itself. The National Human Trafficking Research Center listed victims as a group who called to report trafficking (NHTRC, 2015). Victims are able to speak to the consumers and tell them they are not willing participants. Therefore, I suggest a secondary theory to exploring the victims' experiences. As these victims are all certified and, therefore, have agreed to cooperate with law enforcement and eligible for rehabilitative services with the medical and social service providers (the aforementioned

"State"), they have already spoken up on their own behalf and agreed to speak out against their trafficker. Thus I suggest Empowerment Theory as the secondary theory. In working with clients who have faced trauma or intrapersonal conflict, empowerment theory is the process of increasing personal power so that individuals can take action and improve their situations (Gutierrez, 1995). It seeks to help clients gain power over their own life's decisions and actions by reducing the effect of challenges and vulnerabilities motivating them act on behalf of their own biopsychosocial needs and well-being.

Chapter 3: Components of the Dissertation as Articles

Article One: The Men as Consumers

Working Title:

Disconnected Experiences: The Role of Men in Identifying Latina Sex Trafficking Victims

Introduction/Literature

Human trafficking, a 32 billion dollar global industry is the exploitation of a person by the use of force, fraud, or coercion; it is a criminal act and a violation of human rights (International Labour Office, 2008). The elements of force, fraud, or coercion are vital to identifying a victim of human trafficking. Traffickers recruit and keep victims through the use of violence, threats, false promises, debt bondage, and other methods of manipulation and control for the purpose of exploitation (Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, or TVPA, of 2000). A person is not considered a victim if they are willingly and actively involved in the industry or exploits.

The Department of Justice states that 14,500 to 17,500 international victims are trafficked in the U.S. annually; however, the vast majority of victims go unidentified (Department of Justice, 2006). Less than one-half of one percent (0.4%) of the estimated number of victims of sex trafficking in the U.S. are actually identified, demonstrating a critical need for better victim identification processes (United States Department of State, 2010).

The low number of victims identified is further exemplified by the severe underuse of the T-visa mechanism in the U.S. At its inception, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act focused solely on international victims of sex and labor trafficking. The TVPA established the T-visa, which allows for certifying 5,000 international victims per year, making them eligible for services afforded to refugees (Department of State, 2000). Yet in the first 10 years of the T-visa's

existence, only about 2,300 total visas were granted, when 50,000 could have been awarded; in that same 10 years, an estimated 175,000 international victims were trafficked in the U.S. (Hepburn and Simon, 2013).

Stop the demand

In response to this severe under-identification of victims, the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) in Texas created a human trafficking task force in 2009. In its inaugural report, the OAG task force recommended that "[a]ny policy designed to reduce human trafficking must also consider strategies aimed at reducing the demand side of human trafficking" (TXOAG, 2011; p. 6). The Texas Attorney General at the time (and now Governor) Greg Abbott stated that the "callous truth is that human trafficking is largely driven by the principles of supply and demand" (Texas Office of the Attorney General, 2012, pg. 7). However, the "supply and demand" language that has become commonplace in anti-trafficking efforts is not based on the economic model used to determine product cost, but rather on a theory posed by women's studies professor Donna M. Hughes. Hughes published a theoretical model which she posited explains the growth of the sex trafficking industry. In her words, "men create the demand; women are the supply" (Hughes, 2000; page 3). This theory has become the driving force behind anti-trafficking policies and efforts in the U.S. and worldwide. The theory credits four components with creating the growth of the sex trafficking industry: the men who are the consumers who demand sex acts for purchase; the traffickers who are the profiteers who exploit women to meet the demand; the culture that normalizes prostitution and allows men to purchase sex acts creates a lax market for the industry to thrive; and the state which passively contributes to the demand by not properly regulating prostitution or prosecuting the consumers (Hughes, 2004; Hughes, 2005). Anti-trafficking efforts, thus, remain prosecution-focused. That is, efforts

are placed disproportionately on addressing the "demand" while not always addressing or considering the "supply" (i.e., the victims). It remains unclear, however, whether the "consumers" are aware that human trafficking may be playing a role in meeting their demand for prostitution, or whether increasing their knowledge about human trafficking would affect their sex-purchasing behaviors.

Current "stop the demand" efforts in Texas target men as consumers by establishing "john schools" (classes that teach first time offenders of sex solicitation that prostitution is demeaning to women); criminalization (increased penalties for purchasing sex such as longer sentences and registering as a sex offender); and, at times, public shaming (such as posting mug shots of sex solicitors on billboards or websites), which all single out the men as perpetrators (Berger, 2012; Bernstein, 2010; Soderlund, 2005; Yen, 2008). These methods target men as "perpetrators of sex trafficking" by reprimanding them for soliciting prostitution based on the theory that eliminating the demanding consumers will halt the supply of sex trafficking victims. This creates serious challenges for the process of identifying sex trafficking victims. Targeting men who solicit commercial sex workers and deeming them perpetrators of sex trafficking conflates prostitution with sex trafficking. Federal and state legal definitions for prostitution and sex trafficking are differentiated by the willingness of the person engaging in commercial sex acts, whereas as victims of trafficking are controlled through fraud, force, or coercion.

The role of consumers in victim identification

In 2008, the Houston Police Department received a call from a Latina victim who was being trafficked for sex in a local *cantina*, which is a working class neighborhood bar that mostly employs undocumented women and caters to Latino men (Fernandez-Esquer & Agoft, 2012). She made the call after confiding in a male client who then lent her his cell phone and taught her

how to call the authorities (Olsen, 2008). This was not an isolated incident. According to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, 2,713 (12.7%) of "substantive calls" to the national hotline came from possible victims while 115 (0.5%) came from buyers of commercial sex (National Human Trafficking Resource Center, 2015). This half a percentage is not insignificant considering the tens of thousands of calls a year made to the NHTRC and to local law enforcement.

This paper focuses specifically on the immigrant Latino population and the hidden phenomenon of international sex trafficking. The NHTRC categorizes Latino sex trafficking networks as closed networks targeting Latino consumers and trafficking Latina women in various settings. These include cantinas, the working class neighborhood bars that mostly employ undocumented women and cater to Latino men (Fernandez-Esquer & Agoft, 2012); commercial-front brothels; or residential brothels in Latin enclaves (Polaris Project, 2011).

This paper explores the perceptions various stakeholders regarding the role of men in Latino sex networks, as it relates to the identification of trafficking victims. Males who frequent cantinas for purchasing sex; social service providers; and foreign-born trafficking victims were interviewed and discussed their unique experiences with men involved in Latino sex networks.

Insights into the nuances of Latino sex trafficking networks may help consumers who come in contact with sex trafficking victims to properly identify them as such. The study was conducted in Houston, Texas, which has one of the largest Latino communities in the U.S. and one of the highest incidences of human trafficking in the U.S. (National Human Trafficking Resource Center, 2015), making it timely and highly significant.

Methods

This study employed a pragmatic utilitarian framework to interview three populations of stakeholders their experiences in the Latino sex network in Houston cantinas. According to Patton (2002), the pragmatic method allows for flexibility when qualitative research uses alternative strategies in an ethical manner. As this study developed, the closed networks that were being discussed became apparent and the study then developed a case study strategy (Yin, 2003; Hartle, 2004; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The unit of analysis is qualitative interviews with members of Latino sex networks. As such, stakeholders impacted by potential sex trafficking within Latino sex networks were identified, including the men who frequent these networks, the service providers who investigate the traffickers and assist victims, and the victims of the traffickers within the network. The study was approved by the University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS), which is the local Institutional Review Board.

Participants

The study used a combination of criterion sampling to determine which stakeholders had the most importance in exploring experiences of sex trafficking in Latino sex networks (Patton, 2001) and snowball sampling in order to recruit hidden populations within the networks (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997). For inclusion in the study, respondents (n=20) identified as being either 1) a male immigrant from Latin America who has frequented a *cantina* in the last 3 years and endorsed a preference for Latina commercial sex workers (n=4); 2) an investigator, case worker, or lawyer for foreign-born Latina sex trafficking victims (n=7), or; 3) a foreign-born Latina who has been identified as a victim of sex trafficking and is currently enrolled in services (n=9). Male participants (referred to as "clients" by the victims and "johns" by service providers) were recruited by the researcher at labor sites and cantinas, or voluntarily contacted the researcher for an interview when referred by another participant (social worker, victim, or other male

immigrant respondent). Service providers were recruited by the researcher at their agencies or were referred by their colleagues who participated as respondents. Victims were referred by case workers and attorneys who were contacted by the researcher about the study. The total participant breakdown is illustrated below.

Table 1. Study Participants

Participants	n
Men (n=4)	
El Salvador	1
Honduras	1
Mexico	2
Social Service Providers (n=7)	
Attorney	3
Case Manager	2
Law Enforcement	2
Victims (n=9)	
El Salvador	2
Honduras	4
Mexico	2
Nicaragua	1
TOTAL Participants	20

Data Collection

All data collection forms and interviews for service providers were in English, while all forms and interviews for victims and the male clients were in Spanish. Standardized open-ended interview guides were developed so that participants could share as much detail of their experiences and perceptions as they would like (Turner, 2010). This interview design provides rich narratives, which can make data analysis arduous as the researcher needs to comb the data to provide an accurate reflection of the overall perspective (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Because the primary researcher had previous experience volunteering with anti-trafficking efforts (see Ethical Concerns) and because this study involved multiple participants and sample groups, this design

helped to reduce researcher bias within the study (Gall, et al., 2003; Turner, 2010). The interviews covered a variety of topics germane to the role of each participant, but all respondents were asked about their understanding of the process of identifying Latina victims of sex trafficking. Interview guides had topics chosen to describe the perceptions and experiences of each group of stakeholders; to define their roles in Latino sex networks; and to illustrate their knowledge of proper victim identification. Broad topics were approached as outlined in the interview guides, including perceptions of prostitution, knowledge of sex trafficking, and any role played by the respondent in identifying victims of international sex trafficking.

Interviews with the male clients included informing respondents of the legal definitions of human trafficking and only the men were asked if they knew what sex trafficking is, as it could not be assumed that they were familiar with the topic. Service providers and victims who have been identified and are receiving services, on the other hand, could be assumed to know about trafficking. Male clients were first asked about their experiences, perceptions, and preferences and then about their understanding of human trafficking. The men were also given brochures in Spanish from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services describing human trafficking and then asked if this information related to their experiences in cantinas. Service providers were asked about their training and experience, descriptions of their cases, and what helps or hinders in rehabilitating victims. Victims were asked about their trafficking experience, their understanding of the identification and certification processes, and what helped them leave their trafficking situation. Interviews were de-identified and the victims and men were assigned aliases in all audio recordings and subsequent transcripts. Service providers were identified by their job title (e.g., case manager, immigration attorney, etc.). Recordings were transcribed and assessed with all digital records remaining in a password-secured computer.

Data Analyses

The research team consisted of the primary researcher (a female social work PhD candidate with a background in human trafficking) and two research assistants (one male Master of Sociology student with no background in human trafficking and one female Master of Social Work with some training on human trafficking). All three are bilingual, bicultural, and binational Mexican-Americans. The primary researcher collected all the data and the two research assistants transcribed interviews verbatim into Microsoft Word® documents. In order to fully understand the different questions asked of stakeholders and their experiences, all team members listened to all audios and read all interview transcripts, regardless of which audios they transcribed individually. The first participant group to complete interviews was the social service providers, followed by the victims; the final participant group interviewed was the men.

The primary researcher reviewed all transcripts for any missing text data due to inaudible or misunderstood audio data. The unit of analysis was the 20 text interviews which were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The Word documents containing the transcribed interviews were uploaded into NVivo® software for data analysis. The research team held an initial meeting to discuss the content of the audio files. This initial discussion was a broader conversation during which the research team accomplished several tasks. First, team members shared their overall reactions to the data. Second, the two team members who transcribed the interviews identified passages in the audio files that they considered difficult to comprehend. The primary researcher then listened to these passages to try to determine what the challenge was. For instance, whether the respondent had used an acronym, or street language, or whether it was simply that the audio recorder failed to accurately capture what was said (i.e., the segment was inaudible). Most of the challenges were related to language usage. Very few were the result of

inaudible segments (for example, the respondent suddenly lowering his/her voice and becoming momentarily inaudible). The third task accomplished by the research team at this initial meeting was to discuss the approach and timeline for coding and analyzing the data. For triangulation purposes the team decided that each of the three team members would analyze data individually and then meet 3-4 weeks after for team analysis. The team met monthly over four months.

The team used a content analysis approach. The aim of the analysis was to explore the different experiences with Latino sex networks. In coding individual experiences and perceptions of each sample group (i.e., service providers, victims, and men who visited cantinas to purchase sex), the team analyzed the manifest content in the interviews in order to describe the themes present in the transcripts. Analysis began with specific observations of the role of men between sample groups and progressed towards the emergence of a general pattern (Patton 2002). The pattern that emerged was the experiences specific to Latino sex networks happening in Houston cantinas where the traffickers (or pimps), victims (or prostitutes) and most of the male clients were all Latinas or Latinos. The team then used a case study strategy (Yin, 2003), using within-case content analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989).

First-level coding explored how each sample group described their own role in the Latino sex networks. The team discussed words and phrases respondents used to describe their roles and how they understood sex trafficking, which gave rise to in vivo codes for role descriptions. Second-level coding included how respondents perceived the role of other stakeholders in Latino sex networks and trafficking, such as how men view victims and how victims view the service providers. The team then connected each sample group's description of their role in the networks to their description of the role of other groups. Third-level coding then developed the overall themes emerging from all texts and how they synergized in regards to victim identification. The

team then realized that all sample groups discussed the role of male clients in victim identification. Fourth-level coding then consisted of reassessing all texts for proper in vivo text that represented the themes.

According to Yin (2003), using a case study strategy explores distinct situations with various variables of interest rather than data points and relies on multiple sources of evidence. Though the research can employ various methods, the case study strategy is preferred when the inquiry is "how" or "why" and the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context (Yin, 2003). In this paper, the real-life context is the Latino sex networks in Houston and how they are affected by current human trafficking policies. The contemporary phenomenon that emerged is that while only the men were asked about their role, all other stakeholders discussed the role of men without being queried about it. Thus, a case study strategy was used to explore this phenomenon of male clients within Latino sex networks as it emerged from the interviews throughout the coding process.

Ethical Concerns

The primary researcher has volunteered with both human trafficking and Latino labor organizations in Houston for 7 years and has earned the trust of the communities. The researcher had no prior communication with any of the victims or male clients, but had previously known one of the service providers. Aside from discussing the T-visa process with victims, immigration status was not directly asked of any victim or male client respondents, though most alluded to being undocumented at some point. Because of this, safety measures were taken into consideration of both the respondents and the researcher. Respondents were assured of confidentiality, given the option to be interviewed at their preferred location, and all data was de-identified. The primary researcher, a female, was always accompanied by a male colleague and

reported location and contact information to a second colleague when interviewing at labor sites or cantinas. Seven male client respondents withdrew or were dropped from the study after initial screening, either for fear of being reported or deported, or for safety concerns of the researcher.

Results

The initial intention of this paper was to describe only the men's perspectives on Latino sex networks and trafficking victims' identification. However, during the interviews with other stakeholders, the transcription process, and preliminary data analyses, the research team discovered that all of the study respondents – including service providers and victims – discussed the men who came in contact with victims. Although the interview guides for service providers and victims did not specifically ask about the men's role, there was enough qualitative data surrounding the topic of male clients to warrant an aggregate analysis. Thus, the unit of analysis became all interviews (n=20) to explore patterns of data related to the phenomenon of the male client's role within the Latino sex networks.

The Disconnect in Perception vs. Reality of all Stakeholders

The most common theme that emerged when service providers and victims discussed the role of men was their mixed perceptions of how men cause problems for the victims and at the same time some men actually helped victims. This led to ambivalent feelings about the men and their role. Service providers mentioned that men cause the trafficking by creating the demand or they increase risks of abuse for victims. Yet, providers also discussed the different ways in which they have experienced the men as providing assistance to the victims. The specific nature of this "disconnect" between the perception of men as only being the problem, and the realization that men are also part of the solution in many cases, varied by the type of provider and will be discussed later in the paper. The victims themselves would state that they did not think men

cared about their situation and would not help them, yet gave various examples of men's help – sometimes within the same sentence – throughout the interviews.

The men, for their part, experienced their own disconnect between perception and reality. All four men endorsed the perception that some of the women were, to some degree, forced into sex work. However, they did not seem to understand that this legally defined the women as victims of sex trafficking or as requiring assistance. This is also discussed in more detail.

The Disconnect of Social Service Providers

Service providers' discussion of the men fell into three distinct categories, depending on the specific services they were providing.

Law Enforcement Agents

Two Law Enforcement Agents (LEAs) who investigate and prosecute Latina sex trafficking cases in Houston were interviewed. They possess a combined 26 years of investigating human trafficking cases across the U.S. In discussing their work on investigating and prosecuting cases of trafficking, they discussed on a macro level (i.e., criminal investigations are broader than working individually with a client) what they saw as underlying issues or causes while then relating this to their individual cases. When men were initially mentioned, they were seen as the cause for sex trafficking and blamed for the overall problem. Yet when discussing their cases in more detail, the agents' perceptions of the men's role shifted. In particular, the age of the victim was discussed as a reason why men have reported cases of trafficking in prior investigations. The following quote from an LEA exemplifies this:

> "Obviously for the johns – if it weren't for the demand, then the pimps and traffickers wouldn't be as successful as they are. The johns shouldn't be doing what they're doing. But this is the ironic part about the johns: Sometimes our intel [intelligence] comes from

> johns. They'll go someplace and say, 'Man I went in there looking for a woman not a child!' And they'll get upset and call law enforcement and report this place that has kids in there. I don't know – it's kind of, I think, a little ironic. But some of our intel does come from johns. [Interviewer*: Is that across the board or just with the Latina cases you've worked?*] That's across the board."

The second LEA discussed similar perceptions and experiences:

> "Now we do have some trafficking cases that arise from some smuggling case, but those trafficking cases we are seeing around the international arena involve the cantina community or the spa community and it has to do with alcohol or it has to do with men that have a demand or need to pay for sex because they can't form healthy relationships and that's why we have this industry, this problem in Houston, because of that."

A few minutes later, when the respondent also referred to age and was asked to clarify, he continued,

> "We do occasionally get a john with a conscience who has a certain tolerance [sic] for age. It's got to be an adult and that girl over there does not look like an adult. Therefore, there is something wrong with this picture and you get an anonymous tip. You don't get a call that says, 'My name is Joe Hernandez and I'm a john. I pay X amount of money for sex every Friday, and last Friday I saw this girl.' You'll get information that comes in anonymously that one of the girls or a couple of them looked a little too young for their comfort level and that is really an important message to get. And it can come from a john with a conscience who sees someone that might look too young to get in the business … I think johns are an important source of information when it comes to abuse or when it comes to minorities, or the minor age of the victim. I'm not a real big fan of that culture

but you know what? It's as old as our country is. You're always going to have a demand."

The quotes presented above illustrate the "disconnect" between the different roles men can play in sex networks as perceived by the two LEAs interviewed. Their initial characterization of the men discussed only their role in creating and maintaining the problem. However, as they expanded on their discussions, they were confronted with the realization that at times men also assisted in their efforts to identify and help victims. The attorneys interviewed were also confronted with this dilemma and their experience is discussed next.

Attorneys

Three immigration lawyers who specialize in T-visas and work with Latinas in Houston were interviewed. Their experience totaled 32 years of working with foreign-born trafficking victims across the U.S. and in other countries. LEAs addressed trafficking cases more broadly, within the context of their investigations. Attorneys, on the other hand, who more often work with individual victims, discussed their cases and experiences more intimately. In recounting specific cases and their stories, the attorneys discussed the men involved in these cases with some familiarity. For instance, attorneys matter-of-factly mentioned that some men were abusive, but also mentioned the role of men as "the break in a case" or the one who assisted the victim. Attorneys also assessed cases as a whole, but spoke of their individual clients' (victims) experiences. They saw male clients as contributing to the Latino sex trade, but also as being the solution.

When asked what is lacking in the process of identifying Latina victims in immigrant and cantina settings, one lawyer stated that outreach was vital. When asked how, the conversation shifted from working with community partners to the men. The attorney replied:

> "I think law enforcement, but also community outreach because the latest woman that worked in the cantina that was my client, she had been rescued from the cantina by one of the patrons there – and he wasn't a patron that would take the girls upstairs. He would just drink and he became friends with another girl and he eventually was told what was happening and he kind of had a crush on my client. She was 17 at the time. She was 16 when trafficked, 17 when rescued. And one day he told her, 'Well, I'm going to take you upstairs,' and she felt she couldn't refuse, even though she felt disappointed because she felt there was nothing there and now he's interested in having sex with her, but in fact he didn't. That night, because they were understaffed at the cantina, they kind of had like a breach in their safety where he took her out the back, put her in his car, and left. He rescued two more girls. And he gave her a choice, 'You can leave or you can stay with me – it's up to you.' She ended up living with him, they had two kids and they ended up living as a couple."

Another attorney also discussed similar cases while addressing the perception of johns as perpetrators and mentioned outreach to the men as a victim identification tactic:

> "The johns that I hear about through my clients are often not the bad johns. I mean, the johns have been the saviors in more cases than anybody else in the community – even law enforcement. To me, it's like, 'Oh that's great – go arrest all the johns,' or you could get them on our side and have them help the victims. They're the ones who have reached out and been like, 'You need to get out of this situation.' They're the ones that have brought clients to legal service providers and been like, 'This woman's been through hell – she can't go back!' So I'm not, like, an anti-john guy. [*Interviewer: Do you see that a*

lot in the Latino community?] All the time. So I've had a lot of johns reach out to try to help women in trafficking. [*Interviewer: Are they usually themselves Latinos?*] Uh-huh."

This same attorney expressed the need for clients to heal so they do not then risk an abusive cycle or depend on a male client who rescued them. Regardless of the relationship that may or may not occur between a victim and her rescuing john, the fact that male clients help identify the victims is stressed as the focus. This attorney also addressed the difference between prostitution and sex trafficking, stating that the difference lies in the perceptions or how the johns view the victims as opposed to how the traffickers view them:

> *[Interviewer: …but you say johns can still be part of the process?*] "The solution. [*Interviewer: Of the solution? Why do you say that? Why do you say they can be part of the solution?*] Because the johns are going in to get X and to pay a market value. And women, at some point and in some communities, can go into prostitution with a market analysis, an agreement and consent. In trafficking that's been stripped away, right? So they're incredibly vulnerable. So when they look to somebody who is going to treat them like a human, that's a whole lot better than the trafficker where they absolutely had no choice and their agency has been stripped. There's a huge push from organizations in Houston … there's a heavy fervent to this anti-john – you know, 'Let's prosecute heavily!' I'm sure not an expert [on criminal law], but I also don't want the law to be that a john cannot take steps to help a woman get out of the situation and bring her to law enforcement without facing prosecution."

As seen above, the attorneys who work with trafficking victims also experienced a disconnect when discussing the role of men, initially speaking of the men as only being the problem, and

later coming to terms with the role of men as helpers as well. This experience was shared by the Case Managers, and is discussed next.

Case Managers

The two social workers interviewed have been case managers with Latina victims for a combined total of 9 years across the U.S. and in other countries. These case managers, who work directly and individually with their clients (victims) at the micro level, discussed the victims' stories more emotionally. They were angered by the stories about abusive johns, and also expressed surprise and concern that the majority of their clients (victims) had been assisted or rescued by johns. Like the attorneys, case managers also discussed the high rate of Latina victims who were rescued by johns in cantinas, which they had experienced firsthand during their time as case managers both in and out of Houston. Many of these rescue efforts resulted in long-term relationships, marriages, and/or families. It seemed so prevalent that, to the case managers, it was cause for concern. However, the basis for the concern varied according to their experience with victims and their personal notions of the johns. When asked of the challenges – policy-related, resources, or personal – of working with the population, this was the struggle that the first case manager discussed:

> [*Interviewer: What is one of the challenges that you face in providing services to the victims?]* "I think it's really difficult – I actually talk about this a lot – it's really difficult to be a professional and be a person. … something that I found really hard to deal with, and it's none of our business and you can't pass judgment on it, is that a lot – I found it very surprising that a lot of victims live with johns that found them in the cantinas and who saved them and got them out of there. And this is completely personal; it has nothing to do with the program. That worries me because I feel like you can go from one person,

like – I don't know how to say it without making judgements – but you can go from one situation of captivity to another situation of extreme dependence. And I found that, on a very personal level, difficult because I can't imagine that a john that goes to these cantinas is the best kind of man to then be part of these women's feelings like that. And that's obviously your judgement and has nothing to do with him but it can be something that's quite difficult to listen to if you're really worried about their feelings process. To me, on a lot of levels, it can be a reminder; it can be an unhealthy situation. But obviously everybody has their own agency and you can't really say, 'You shouldn't be doing this and you shouldn't be living with this man.' But that was something that I found quite difficult to understand and be comfortable with – that this is how – and I didn't mention it earlier when we talked about how people leave their situation but that is how a lot of people get out of the situation. *[Interviewer: So that was pretty common?]* It was very common. I was really surprised. And I mean not only that these men kind of forcibly or somehow got these women out of that situation, but then they were still together for a long time. And that these men that they met in the cantinas would maybe be the father of their children and that that would be their long-term partner. And as my coworker's told me, 'That's not your concern and that's not your judgment to make.' Which is completely true but it's just something that personally, I was surprised and was slightly worried by. *[Interviewer: Was this across the board with all victims or mostly the Latina ones?]* I think most of the – actually all of the victims I'm talking about were Latina, so yeah. … I spoke to the rest of the team about it and they said that it's very common. I don't know if they meant it as very common only among Latinas or in general."

The quote above clearly communicates the struggle the case manager is experiencing when attempting to reconcile the notion that men can be a big part of the problem of trafficking, and also, in some cases, can result in the rescue of the victim and a long-term relationship.

The second case manager addressed the high rate of rescues by men at their agency as well. Even while stating that most of their victims were assisted by johns, this case manager refers to how uncaring or abusive johns can be:

> "…But most – a lot of the clients – Sorry, a lot of the survivors – most of them have partners that they met in the cantina; might have been their client, may have not. So that's a bit different. In other cases I've seen – the stories that I hear of the clients really doing horrible things to them in the rooms that they had to go in and perform sexual acts. A lot of – some of them cried out to the clients and said, 'I don't want to be here. They have me here against my will.' But still the acts that they do, the johns, it's horrific to hear. *[Interviewer: Like violent or sexual?*] All of the above, yeah. *[Interviewer: … You said you have a few that are in relationships with former clients?*] Yes. *[Interviewer: Do you know how that happened?*] Some of the cases – a lot of the cases, not some – the john assisted them to leave or the john paid the debt off."

This case manager also expressed worry that such situations could potentially lead to unhealthy relationships, but stated that leaving the trafficking situation was the priority.

In addition to the service providers, the victims themselves expressed mixed views about the role of men in their experiences, and struggled to connect these disparate views. The victims' experiences are discussed next.

The Disconnect of Victims

Of the 9 victims interviewed, 7 were rescued from their trafficker – 4 by a male client and 3 by LEAs. All 3 victims rescued by LEAs stated that they believe a trusted male client reported them to police. The remaining 2 victims fled their trafficker and were later assisted by men (1 by a bystander, 1 by a boyfriend) who made them realize that they were trafficking victims and needed to report their case. Victims' perceptions of the men were similar to the LEA's disconnect between their overall assumptions about the men and their individual experiences with specific men. All victims were from Mexico or Central America and had worked at least once in a cantina, though a few were also moved through spas, hotels, or makeshift brothels. Each victim mentioned at least one incident of being assisted by a male client in some way. However, each victim stated that they did not think that the men would help women in situations of trafficking.

It became clear in the victims' narratives that one possible explanation for this disconnect resided in the victims' understanding of what actually constitutes help. One question in the victims' interview guide, under the topic of "Identification Process," asked, "Do you think there were times where people could have helped you and didn't?" The question did not define help, did not single out the male clients, and did not ask the victims if there were times they could have been rescued. Some victims responded by saying that they came across doctors and law enforcement agents that did not assist them, but most answered by referencing their male clients. The victims mentioned several instances when men demonstrated understanding, provided assistance by bringing them necessities or money, and even helped them report their case, while at the same time the stated that they did not believe that men would help them.

According to the victims, the simplest way that men would demonstrate understanding was by not having sex with the victim if she was upset, while still paying so that she would not

be punished. In one case, Valentina stated that when she refused to have sex with men, they would get angry and complained to her trafficker, demanding their money back. The trafficker would then beat her and keep her under careful watch. When asked if this happened often, Valentina stated the following:

> "… [trafficker] would tell me to remember when I behaved badly and he'd take off his belt and beat me … they'd tell me it was because I behaved badly and didn't treat the clients well. I didn't do what they wanted. *[Interviewer: Were there clients that treated you okay or did this happen often?]* One time I tried to talk to my john and he told me he was going to go see how he could help. He respected me and treated me well. And he told me that he would always give me the money even though I wouldn't have sex with him. Then the police came, but they took us to another location. *[Interviewer: Do you mean that the john reported this to the police?]* [nod] *[Interviewer: But [trafficker] was watching and moved you before police arrived?*] Yes."

Other than helping by deciding not to have sex with the victim, some men would also buy the victims necessities. When asked if anyone offered help, Alejandra stated that men would not help because they didn't care, and even her trafficker's friends would come to have sex:

> "They were so rude – just because you're there, they treat you badly. They'd beat you, they'd insult you, saying. 'You are here because you are a whore.' A lot of ugly things. I would come of the room crying … Just a whore. If you are here, you are a whore and you have to do these things."

Yet when asked if she felt that clients understood that victims of trafficking do this against their will, she stated:

> "Some treated us badly … but others, no. They would come and say, 'I know that they take your money and they keep your money.' I don't know if they knew or not, but others would come and say, 'I know that you are in need.' Sometimes they would take us underwear, pizza, food. They'd say, 'I know that you need things here,' and would sometimes give me $20. Some good guys. But I don't know if they knew. I think some did."

Alejandra was sometimes drugged before being sold and told one of the male clients, who did not have sex with her, about it:

> "One client gave me a phone – I had one that he had given me. I always told him about the drugs. He was like a friend; he never had sex with me. He never slept with me."

Though agreeing not to have sex with her might be alarming, Alejandra trusted the man:

> "At first I thought he was a cop, but no. He just liked to see me and would hug me and he gave me a phone. I had it hidden and would try to record things. But he never [had sex with me]. When he got there and saw me drugged, then he didn't want to do anything to me. I thought they had sent a cop because when I was drugged, I'd cry and tell him I didn't want to be here and I do think he was the one [who called the police], but I'm not sure."

While Alejandra was rescued by LEAs, this disconnect between the victims' perceptions of men as not being willing to help and their individual experiences with men who actually helped them was also found among victims who had been rescued by a male client. Victims recounted similar stories of understanding men but when asked if they thought men helped victims of trafficking, they said no. One victim, Isabel, stated that she never disclosed her situation to johns. Yet she

discusses how her trafficker told her that he loved her, and she shared with a client who made her realize that she was being used:

> "I was afraid to leave [trafficker]. But then I met a guy there and he told me that if [trafficker] really loved me, then he wouldn't have me there – he just wants me so he can use me to make money and take it from me. So I got out."

The male client helped her escape and find an apartment. They later married and had been living together for over a year at the time of the interview. However, when asked if she felt male clients would help victims, Isabel stated,

> "No. I don't think so because I never talked to anyone because the owners of the cantina would watch me, so I never told anyone anything."

Another victim's interview exemplifies this in several ways. When asked if anyone could have helped, Soledad states that the people who knew she was a victim might have, but didn't. However, in her example, she discusses the first encounter with a man who ended up helping her leave and living with her for seven years. At one point, Soledad herself conflates prostitution with sex trafficking, saying that she met him at work, yet she assumes that he does not conflate the two and that he knows that she is a victim who is forced into prostitution:

> [*Interviewer: Do you think that that there were times when someone could have helped you but they didn't?]* "Maybe the people who know. But in the case of the father of my daughter, no. … I met him and he told me – first of all, we were at work. For me, that was a job, I had to do it. And he told me that he was a cop. I got really scared and I started to cry. And I told him not to do anything to me – that I didn't have or I didn't know anything. And after he did that – he said a lot of things and started to laugh and gave me a card that had like the police symbol. I didn't recognize it, but he said, 'Look,

this is my card and I'm a cop and now you have to come with me.' And when he saw that I was crying and scared, he laughed. He laughed. Then he said, 'It's not true.' … I told him, 'Why would you do that to me if you know – well – do you know what happens to someone here? Do you know what would happen to me if they knew you were a cop?' He said, 'I was joking with you! I was joking with you!' But I said, 'You shouldn't do that.' So now that you ask me that question, I tell you that yes – there are people that know. But they are only interested in being there for their own pleasure. They don't help you. They don't help you. *[Interviewer: Did you continue seeing him?*] Well I had to. He would go and he was a client. I'd see him because he was the one that offered me help to get out after – you know, after some time being there and seeing the situation. He's the one that offered me the help to get out. He paid off what they told me I owed."

This assumption that men know which women are victims, although the victims might disguise their situation, happened often. Self-identifying as a victim arose as a contributing factor to the disconnect the victims demonstrated. Conflating prostitution with sex trafficking was found in the language used. A few victims stated that even though they knew they were forced to have sex, they were not aware that they were victims of sex trafficking. The Spanish word "obligada," or "obligated," came up in various interviews, yet the connection was lost when compared to being a forced victim (see also Disconnect of the Men). Similar to the prior victim, Libertad had contradicting statements when saying the men would not help, while being rescued by one:

[*Interviewer: You said earlier that you know you were [*obligada*] and that you didn't want to do it but you weren't aware that you were a victim. Do you think that clients think the same way or do you think that they do understand who is a victim of trafficking?}* "At times clients would say that [trafficker] had me [*obligada*]. But I would

say no, that everything was fine. They'd ask, 'You have a husband that has you [*obligada*] to work?' And no, 'I work because I want to,' or I'd always change the conversation. But at times I think that they were aware. Because at times when they'd get there, some would say, 'Hey, you have a pimp!' And if they were buzzed, 'No, I'm not going to give that chick money. That chick is just maintaining that dude.' But they don't know why or they don't know that they have us [*obligadas*]. They don't know that *[Interviewer: How things are?]* Uh-huh. *[Interviewer: Did you ever see one of the clients help the women by paying for her, getting her out, or anything?*] No.*[Interviewer: And what did your [now] boyfriend say when he reported it to the police?*] I don't know exactly what he said when he met with the police."

The quotes above evidence that the victims' disconnect seems more marked than that of the service providers. The service providers are able to express that men play a role both in creating circumstances that result in women being trafficked, and also in helping to identify and rescue some victims. The victims, however, speak of men in general as being the problem, and speak of the particular men who assisted them, in a completely disconnected manner. This will be further explored in the discussion section. The paper now turns to the male clients of the cantinas, who are also experiencing a disconnect, in particular about the role of the women in the Latino sex networks.

The Disconnect of the Men

Of the 4 men interviewed, two stated that they had previously rescued a woman from a sex trafficker, and one of these two married the victim. All four men stated that they would either report or help rescue a woman if they could properly identify her as a victim. When asked if they knew how to help a victim, one said he would first report it to the police, while three stated they

would remove her themselves. Men were asked for their experiences in interacting with and purchasing sex from Latinas at cantinas. In exploring these experiences along with their knowledge and understanding of sex trafficking, the men had a clear understanding that some women were being held against their will, but did not seem to understand that this was considered trafficking.

Men expressed the belief that Latinas who were forced into prostitution have some choice in the situation, especially since immigration status contributed to their situation. For example, they believe that some women have choice, albeit limited, and choose to work in these networks to pay off debts related to their being smuggled into the country. The men use the term *obligada* (obligated) to describe these circumstances. However, they don't consider this to be within the bounds of trafficking. The men make a distinction between a woman who is forced, or *obligada* as stated above, and a woman who is forced, defrauded, or coerced to remain in a situation (i.e., who is a victim of human trafficking); the two just don't seem to be connected in the men's minds. After they learned the legal definition of trafficking, all four men interviewed expressed an understanding that the women were victims of trafficking.

One man, Poncho, stated that although women do not disclose their situation, he knew they were forced because he had been around cantinas all over Mexico and the U.S. where women acted scared as if they were being controlled. Although he stated that he knew women are forced, he also assumed they were doing what they had to, though he was uncertain of how they got involved in the first place:

> [*Interviewer: Do you think there are women working of their own will?*] "Well, I almost doubt it. I almost doubt that there are women that do it 100% of their own will. If they enter this – it's that just entering these places, how can I tell you? You return to that

environment, automatically most of it is stuff you can't get out of. But then you just do what you have to do. They buy you, you sell yourself, and you start losing yourself – be it by your own will or by force. *[Interviewer: They've told you about these experiences?*] No. They can't because, like I said, they're scared."

All men stated that at least some women were obligated to be there, by force, getting involved with the wrong people, or in order to pay off their smuggling debt. The sense was that it was a bad situation for them and they may be "obligated" (*obligada*), but they were doing what they had to do in their situation. Another male client, Emiliano, stated a preference for only Latinas because it is easier to communicate with them. When asked what they would talk about, he said that some victims would cry but did not disclose why:

[*Interviewer: When you're with these women, do you talk about your personal lives?*] "A lot of times there are women who begin to cry because they have a lot of problems, a lot of pressure. Because at times – you don't know if at times someone has them *obligadas*. You get me? There are women who start to cry just looking at you. At those times, I just leave them alone; it's best that I don't do anything to them. I give them the money because actually I'd feel really bad doing something like that to a woman. Actually, I haven't really asked, but I imagine that there are some there who are *obligadas* or who are paying off their *traida* (smuggling). You get me? *[Interviewer: Why don't you ask?*] Because you can't ask questions like that because you don't know if they're listening and they'll fuck you up, too. They'll say, 'Whoa, you're an investigator, or what?' … There is always someone there at the door. Always. I don't know why. Maybe it's to take care of the women or maybe for the dudes that go there and hear what's going on."

Even while discussing the phrase "human trafficking," Emiliano stated that while it's something that he feels badly about, some women chose their situation as a means to migrate:

> [*Interviewer: Had you heard of human trafficking?*] "Yes. *[Interviewer: What does that mean?*] Well, for me it means like with the *coyotes* (smugglers), no? Like the dudes that bring people. *[Interviewer: … Had you heard of sex trafficking?*] Well, for some women, they need to pay it off that way in some cantinas. … They have to pay off their *traida* (smuggling) with sex, do you get me? … If you're on the border of, say, Mexico, there are a lot of women there that arrive alone. They come across *coyotes* and they say, 'Take me to the U.S. and there you can put me to work however you want.' That's the trafficking of immigrants – you can pay it off with sex, you get me? Or pay it off dealing drugs. 'I'm going to take you, but I'm going to put you somewhere and you're going to sell or you'll have to guard some things.' I'm telling you that it's a different kind of deal. *[Interviewer: … Does this mean it's a risk of being an immigrant?*] For them, yes. Well if they're paying a debt, it's difficult. Can you imagine that they're *obligando* you just for money or to pay something off? … Because they're women, too. You can't just *obligar* someone to have sex with you just because you paid."

The perception that the victims have some degree of choice in the matter seemed disconnected from the actual cases of trafficking from which the men said victims should be rescued. On the other hand, Israel stated that he believed that all of the women he encountered were willing prostitutes because they would tell him so, although he also said that he thinks they suffer:

> [*Interviewer: Do they talk to you about their lives?*] "No. Not really. That's private, we don't really talk about that. *[Interviewer: Do they talk about work?*] That yes. Yeah, that

it's their job and they don't want to do anything else. They like it. *[Interviewer: They say that or you ask?*] No, I ask them. [They say] it's their life and their work. It's their job. … I ask them why they aren't with one man, just one man, and they say they don't want to. *[Interviewer: You believe them?*] It could be true."

Though Israel said they didn't discuss their lives, he then began to talk about how the women discuss their kids, where they're from, and their ages. When asked what else he could say about their lives, he says,

"That they've suffered, they're women who suffer. Because they have to put up with someone they don't know. To have sex with someone just for money, I imagine that it's difficult. *[Interviewer: Why?*] Well, imagine being with one man, then another man."

When asked how women discuss their work with him, Israel responded,

"All of them tell me the same thing – that it's their choice, that no one forces them. Everything is their decision, even if it did happen another way – I don't know. *[Interviewer: Another way that you don't know?*] No. *[Interviewer: What have you heard about those situations?*] I've heard on the news and on TV that there have been some cases like that, but I haven't seen it."

Israel stated that not knowing exactly what to do added to the male clients' risks with the traffickers. After the researcher gave him information on human trafficking and discussed the definitions of force, fraud, and coercion with him, Israel was asked if he thought it existed in Houston:

"Probably so. *[Interviewer: Why do you say that, after saying you haven't witnessed it here?*] Because in that perspective, it's bad. If it's a problem, and from what I

understood, it is. It might exist. It doesn't matter whether or not I had identified it [before]."

The clients' understanding of who is a victim was also related to their belief that some things were just wrong under any circumstances. Two male respondents had both rescued Latina victims of sex trafficking, though they felt that the women needed to be rescued for different reasons. Emiliano realized that the prostitute he paid for was a minor while Santiago got to know a woman who told him that her boyfriend forced her to sell sex.

Emiliano relates that he called a pimp (a person who arranges clients for prostitutes) to have a woman brought to his apartment in Houston. Emiliano is a former gang member from Central America who crossed through Mexico. He related to the researcher that, earlier in the interview, he had mentioned that a lot of women are left by smugglers at the Mexico border where other men take advantage of them. He said that a lot of them are young girls that men dress up to appear older and sell. Emiliano rescued a young girl, yet even with her being a minor, the perception of being *obligada* came up:

"… so this dude answers. I tell him, 'I need a chick.' 'Okay.' But like, 'I need a woman.' … there's a knock at my door and no, man, I see a girl and she was like that [petite] little. I said, 'Yo, what's up with her?' 'Well, this is the woman you asked me for.' I was saying, 'No way,' but I didn't say that to him. I asked him how much and he says, 'Give me 60 bucks because she's really good,' and this and that. I gave it to him. … Then the girl starts crying, crying. 'What's wrong? I'm not going to do anything to you. Don't be scared – I won't touch you for any reason. I swear to you that I am not going to touch you. Why are you crying?' [makes scared face] I told her, 'Just because you see my tattoos, don't look at me that way – don't think I'm bad just because I'm covered in

tattoos. I'm not going to do anything to you. I know why you're crying. This dude is abusing you, right?,' I asked her. 'Yes, he kidnapped me. He has me at,' I don't know where because she wasn't familiar with the area. She says, 'It took 20 minutes to get here.' 'Okay,' I told her, 'look, I'm going to call a friend right now and he's going to take us to San Antonio because I have a lot of friends that owe me and I know a lady really well that can help you and even get you into school.' 'But this guy is going to kill me,' she says, 'if you do this and he's going to look for you and kill you!' 'No,' I said, 'he won't last in Houston because what he's doing is – someone will make him pay,' because she was so young, you know? 'And there are other girls, too, where he has me!' So I gave her clothes to change and we left for San Antonio. I told my friend, 'Hey, come take me over. This is what's going on, there's this little chick here, a girl, like 14 years old and they're *obligando* her,' I said, 'but actually, it's also because of her age.' And I took her [to San Antonio]. … I came back and sure enough the dude was looking for me and he found me near a park one day. He said, 'Hey, get your ass over here.' 'What's up, man? What's going on?,' I asked him. 'You're the guy I've been looking for.' I said, 'You know what, man? I went to the restroom and the chick took off running and I'm not going to be running after her. Besides, she was a girl – like 14, 15 years old,' I said, 'and if the cops see me chasing some little girl because of you, and bringing her to you, then I'm going to have problems.' … He says, 'You're gonna have to pay me her money.' I said, 'Fuck no, man. How are you going to charge me? Look, what you're doing is a felony. You could have put her to work in a restaurant or something else around here, anything but be selling her.' I told him, 'I'm a father and I don't like this shit that you're doing.'"

Emiliano periodically checked in on the girl, saying she graduated from high school and eventually moved away – she was 19 years old at the time of the interview.

Another reason male clients discussed for victims being *obligadas* was due to being in relationships with their trafficker. Santiago rescued a woman from a cantina who told him that she was working for her boyfriend. Upon first moving to Houston, Santiago was taken to a cantina where his cousin would sell drugs and pay for sex. Santiago had not purchased sex at a cantina but liked one of the women, so his cousin paid for her to drink with him all night (some women at these cantinas work as *ficheras* and their role is to sit and drink with men and keep them company, for a fee). He says she would lie at first, not telling him her real name, talking about her job, saying she had another relationship, and kept her distance. After a couple of months, she told him that the guy she previously said she was in a relationship with was forcing her to sell sex at the cantina. He had seen commercials about human trafficking and said he knew what it was and that he had to get her out:

> [*Interviewer: Who is a trafficking victim?*] "I don't know. It's that, how do I say it? It's that there are women that say that they do it because they want to, or at least sometimes. *[Interviewer: Did you know what human trafficking meant?*] Yeah. I know that some guys bring them and they sell them here to make them work. *[Interviewer: And if she was [*obligada*] or forced, is she a victim?*] Yeah, because I right away told her to get out. She'd tell me she couldn't right now. She never told me why, just that, 'I can't right now. I can't right now.' I think it was a way for her to break up with her ex [trafficker]."

After a few weeks, the victim was trusted enough to leave the cantina and called Santiago. He convinced her not to go back. The trafficker began looking for her and constantly called her, leaving both threatening messages and saying that he loved her. When asked if he was worried

about the trafficker, Santiago said that his cousin, whom everyone at the cantina knew as a crazy drug dealer who always carried a gun, intervened:

> "I've been around worst people. It ended one day at my cousin's. [The trafficker] came up to my truck and that's when I told him, 'She's with me now, so leave her alone.' I reached that point. It ended there and he never bothered her again. *[Interviewer: Just like that? How did you get him to back off?*] The only reason he was there is because my cousin, the one that I told you is crazy and gets involved in shit, my cousin had called him to come drop off some shit. So [trafficker] went and left it and I took advantage of it. I told him, 'You know what? I want her to stay here so now you and I are gonna talk like men. Stop bothering her because she doesn't want anything to do with you anymore. He had told my cousin that we were sending him texts but it was a lie – we didn't send him anything. He was doing that."

His cousin was notorious at the cantina for selling drugs, buying women, carrying a gun, and making unnecessary, loud threats to people. When he was told what happened, he threatened the trafficker and told him not to go near Santiago. The traffickers left the victim alone after that. Santiago then helped the victim report her case and enroll in services. At the time of the interview, they had been living together for 2 years.

Discussion

The supply and demand theory of sex trafficking (Hughes, 2005) contains several potential limitations that need to be addressed and assessed in different sex trade networks. First, it assumes that men are the cause of the problem because they demand victims of sex trafficking. As seen in the quotes presented above, service providers working on trafficking cases have attested specifically to the assistance and rescue efforts of Latinos in the cantinas, and

investigators said that johns who report trafficking came from all racial and ethnic groups. The men themselves have said that they might perceive that the victim is, for some reason or another, obligated to be there, but do not necessarily equate that to being a victim of sex trafficking. Victims speak disconnectedly about men being unwilling to help them deal with their situation and about the men who have actually helped them, including men who have helped them escape their trafficking situation.

This shows that both the victims and the male clients differ in who they are perceived to be and who they actually are: Victims believe men do not help even though they do, and male clients think that women are willing prostitutes and not victims of sex trafficking. The generalized assumptions posed in the demand theory and its like-minded policies cannot be assumed within this population.

Stop the demand policies (Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, 2011) have removed the focus from the victim while being prosecution-heavy. With the burden of proof being on victims who are already vulnerable and scared to self-identify, other roles in the network should be assessed to determine if others can help identify and assist them. These policing efforts which see the male clients as perpetrators risk removing and disenfranchising an already vulnerable and at-risk population who have proven that they are willing and able to help conclusively identify victims of human trafficking. Risks, nuances, culture, and subcultures should be taken into account rather than assuming that the global problem of sex trafficking can be answered by an oversimplified solution.

Implications for Policy

The exclusivity of cantina settings differs from other sex trade networks in that, generally, the traffickers (or pimps), victims, and customers are all from the same culture. The

ability to relate and communicate removes boundaries that foreign-born victims of sex trafficking might face when seeking services (Barrows & Finger, 2008). Speaking the same language, knowing the cultures (e.g., of the ethnic group, of the cantina life, etc.) and what terms/questions to ask, and sharing (often times) the immigrant experience with the male clients may make it easier for foreign-born Latina victims to ask for help and creates the space for Latino male clients to identify them as victims of trafficking. Service providers are trained to think that they are the first responders and the ones on the frontline in the fight against trafficking and that they are the ones who are best able to identify potential victims of trafficking were they to come across them. However, this requires that either victims first leave their trafficking setting or, in the case of investigations at the cantinas, that they speak with law enforcement agents in the presence of their trafficker. Yet the responders who are on the frontlines and are actually able to conclusively identify victims of sex trafficking in these settings – namely cantinas, in this case – are the men who pay for and talk with the women, experiencing the control of the traffickers. Cases involving the Latino sex network and cantina settings in Houston show how often this occurs. As stakeholders in the sex trade, the men who frequent cantinas have a higher advantage than service providers and can potentially be allies in the fight against sex trafficking.

Current legislation which only allows certification of victims in return for cooperation with the prosecution of traffickers should expand to include other stakeholders who can share the burden of proof with the victim. Prevention measures should also be more inclusive of the men by expanding outreach, education, and awareness efforts to them and targeting their unique access to the networks and potential victims. Rather than criminalizing men in current prosecution-focused policies and preventive education, men should be included as stakeholders

rather than assumed to be the villains. The interviews presented and discussed in this paper demonstrate that that there is a clear distinction between men who may help remove victims from their situation and the traffickers themselves.

Article Two: Service Providers as the State

Experiences of Social Service Providers in Victim Identification and Service Provision for Latinas Trafficked for Sex in Houston and Los Angeles

Introduction/Literature

The process of identifying victims of human trafficking and prosecuting their traffickers is challenging. Current policies result in a highly complex process that involves identification and certification as necessary steps before assisting international victims in fully rehabilitating (United States Department of State, 2010). The elements of force, fraud, or coercion are vital in identifying a victim of human trafficking, as traffickers recruit and keep victims through the use of violence, threats, false promises, debt bondage, and other methods of manipulation and control for the purpose of exploitation (Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, 2000; Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, 2000).).

The U.S. is widely considered one of the leading destination countries for international victims of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual and labor exploitation (United States Department of State, 2014). The Department of Justice reports 14,500 to 17,500 international victims trafficked in the U.S. annually, but the vast majority of these victims go unidentified (United States Department of State, 2010). According to the Department of Justice (2010), only 0.4% of the estimated victims of sex trafficking in the U.S. are actually identified. At its inception, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (2000) established the T-visa in order to annually certify 5,000 international victims of human trafficking as such, making them eligible for services afforded to refugees (Department of State, 2010).

As of December 2014, the states with the highest rates of human trafficking are Texas and California, two States with large Latino populations. Texas and California have regularly

exchanged the top two spots in human trafficking cases since the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) began analyzing reports in 2009 (National Human Trafficking Resource Center, 2015). While the majority of states averaged 150 calls to the NHTRC in 2012, Texas and California totaled 1,900 and 2,055 calls respectively (NHTRC, 2015). Most calls in both states were made in English (1,439 in Texas and 1,815 in California) with the second most used language in the calls being Spanish (419 in Texas and 175 in California). The vast majority of these calls and eventual cases occurred in Houston and Los Angeles (LA), as has consistently been the case since the inception of the NHTRC hotline (NHTRC, 2015). This paper explores the experiences of social service providers in victim identification and service provision for Latinas trafficked for sex in Houston and Los Angeles.

Background of the Problem

International victims of trafficking are a hidden and vulnerable population affected by a covert industry. The T-visa is granted to foreign-born victims trafficked in the U.S. who have been certified by law enforcement, a judge, the Departments of State and Justice, or the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) as someone who has been forced, defrauded, or coerced into sex or labor trafficking. Once certified, the T-visa affords the same services as refugee status such as access to housing, medical, social, legal, and vocational services. Complicating the ability to properly identify and assist trafficking victims is the lack of uniformity in a reporting process. The Department of State commissioned itself through the TVPA to report the number of victims actually certified, but there are no estimates of cases under investigation or potential victims.

Further complicating the process is the multitude of federal, state, and local hotlines to report suspected cases of trafficking. The U. S. Department of Homeland Security, the Department of State, some state Offices of Attorney Generals (OAGs), some local county sheriff offices and city police departments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) all have hotlines to report potential cases of human trafficking. The NHTRC is the most established national hotline for reporting tips and finding local anti-trafficking services and training, and answers calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. When receiving tips of potential trafficking or crisis calls, the NHTRC will file reports with local law enforcement while documenting the calls. During the last reauthorization of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPRA 2013), the U.S. Department of State established a partnership with the NHTRC and encouraged federal agencies to endorse its use.

Latina Victims and Social Service Providers

The role of law enforcement and service providers in the victim identification and certification process is critical, as law enforcement and others investigating trafficking networks are considered first-responders and social service providers (health, mental health, social service professionals) have contact with this vulnerable population at a crucial time (Hodge & Lietz, 2007; Isaac, Solak, & Giardino, 2011). Law enforcement agents (LEAs) are the first to confront victims in response to illicit activity such as prostitution or drugs. However, it cannot be assumed that all LEAs working on such investigations know or understand the definition of a trafficking victim or how to properly identify them. All fifty states now have anti-trafficking legislation, but not all legislate mandatory training of law enforcement or social service providers (SSPs). Moreover, states that do mandate training are not uniform in specifying what training is to be offered and by whom. Texas and California both have human trafficking task forces which

include law enforcement agencies and are overseen by their Offices of the Attorneys General (OAG), yet it is not clear who can deliver training in these two states and what definition of human trafficking is approved for statewide distribution (Texas Office of the Attorney General, 2012; California Department of Justice, 2012).

Social service providers may not encounter victims in their trafficking environment, but they do come into contact with victims. Isaac and colleagues estimated that 28% of victims of trafficking came into contact with service providers at least once during their captivity, making service providers one of the few groups of professionals with access to victims during their trafficking situation (Isaac et al, 2011). Cultural considerations may further cloud the issue. A government study in England found that trained social workers working with immigrant populations had suspicions of sexual abuse and exploitation of children (namely forced child marriages) but did not report or identify the victims for fear of appearing culturally insensitive (Ministry of Justice, 2009). In the U.S., Latina sex trafficking victims suffer from trauma, the shame of being perceived as a prostitute, and fear of deportation or risking the safety of their families (Haynes, 2004; Garza, 2011). Cumulative vulnerabilities and cultural constructs may keep victims silent and hesitant to trust those involved in the investigative and rehabilitative processes (Herrera, Rajsbaum, Agoff & Franco, 2006; Barrows & Finger, 2008; Haynes, 2004).

Having a uniform understanding and definition of a sex trafficking victim among law enforcement and service providers could help to develop conclusive evidence of the victims' trafficking (Barrows & Finger, 2008). This uniformity could also be critical in alleviating the burden of proof for those victims who face these challenging factors, which often keep them from cooperating in the investigation and receiving needed services. Thus, LEAs and SSPs, representing the state and policies which determine victim assistance, might face an impasse:

they may themselves be certain that they are dealing with an international sex trafficking victim, but cannot assist the victim or build a trafficking case without the victim testifying.

This paper describes the experiences of service providers who work in identifying and assisting foreign-born Latina victims of sex trafficking in Houston and Los Angeles. aims in interviewing the SSPs are to: (1) explore different provider roles in working to identify, certify, and assist Latina victims of international sex trafficking; (2) determine how current policies affect (help or hinder) these roles; and (3) assess if uniformity across the different roles can be achieved to create a comprehensive process of victim identification and certification. These perspectives could help determine whether uniformity exists, and to what extent, among the many roles involved in identification, reporting, investigating, and servicing of Latina sex trafficking victims.

Methods

The research team consisted of the primary researcher (a female social work PhD candidate) and two research assistants (one male Master of Sociology student and one female Master of Social Work). The primary researcher collected the data while the two research assistants transcribed audio files verbatim. The primary researcher then reviewed all transcripts for any missing text data due to inaudible or misunderstood audio data.

Individual qualitative interviews rather than focus groups were chosen because of the varied provider roles involved in the identification and certification process, such as working for a law enforcement agency investigating a case, being the social service professional responsible for assessing or treating victims, or legally assisting the victims. This study sought the individual experiences and in-depth discussion over interactive dialogue which ran the risk of being

reflective of an agency's policies and not the broader issues. In this paper, law enforcement agents (LEAs), attorneys, and case managers who work with Latina victims of international sex trafficking are collectively referred to "social service providers" (SSPs).

Houston SSPs were asked to meet with the researcher for an interview regarding their role and experiences in working with Latina victims of international sex trafficking, to be conducted at their office/agency. LA-based SSPs had an initial phone screening with an explanation of the study and review of consent form. The researcher then sent respondents the consent form via email and scheduled a phone or video conference interview after the consent form had been signed, scanned, and returned. The consent form explained that the interviews were voluntary and that they would not be compensated for their participation to avoid conflicts of interest; that the interviews would be audio recording and de-identified; and that all data would be kept in a password-secured computer. Agencies were informed that identifying information of individual interviews would not be shared with individual agencies or with the network of service providers, regardless of the number of respondents from the same agency. Respondents were identified by their roles and locations only (e.g., LA Case Manager 1; HOU Legal 1; LA Case Manager 2; etc.) in all audio recordings and subsequent transcripts.

Participants

All interviews with SSPs were conducted in English. However, because language is a well-documented barrier to Latina victims of international sex trafficking receiving services (Hopper, 2004), the primary researcher inquired about the SSPs Spanish-language fluency. Of twelve SSPs, three identified as Latino/Hispanic (one in LA, two in Houston), and eight reported speaking fluent Spanish (three in LA, five in Houston).

To identify potential participants, the study used a targeted recruitment approach augmented with snowball sampling (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997). The primary researcher first contacted local Human Trafficking Task Forces and the largest agencies providing victim services in Houston and LA. The primary researcher had volunteered with agencies in Houston for several years and knew one of the Houston SSPs before the study (an attorney) who helped recruit other respondents. The researcher was not familiar with SSPs in LA, but one LA-based case manager volunteered to be interviewed and then helped the researcher recruit other respondents.

Case managers, law enforcement agents, and attorneys, all of whom work directly with Latina victims of international sex trafficking in the process of identification and certification, were recruited for individual interviews. During participant recruitment, the variety of roles represented in Houston and Los Angeles did not match. Houston had a more varied sample of service providers, whereas all Los Angeles respondents were case managers (further discussed in results). Table 1 contains a breakdown of the final sample of service providers interviewed, by job title and city.

Table 2. Service Providers by Job Title and City

Participants	n
Houston (n=7)	
Law Enforcement Agents: two different agencies	2
Attorneys: two different agencies	3
Case Managers: same agency	2
Los Angeles (n=5)	
Case Managers: two different agencies	5
TOTAL Participants	12

Houston case managers were from the same trafficking-specific agency, but one case manager had previously worked for an agency in California. Los Angeles case managers were from two

different agencies: four from a trafficking-specific agency, one from a trafficking department of another agency. Only law enforcement respondents stated that they were mandated to receive training on working with victims of human trafficking according to state policy.

Data Collection

Standardized open-ended interview guides were developed so that participants could share as much detail of their experiences and perceptions as they would like (Turner, 2010). Although this design provides rich narratives, it can also make data analysis arduous as the researcher needs to comb the data to accurately reflect the overall perspective (Gall, et al., 2003). As stated in the Participants section, the primary researcher had previous experience volunteering with anti-trafficking efforts and previously knew one of the respondents. This study also involved multiple participants and sample groups. Therefore, a standardized open-ended interview design helped to reduce researcher bias within the study (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003; Turner, 2010). All interviews were conducted in English, recorded, and lasted 45 minutes to 1 hour. Interviews in Houston were conducted in person and interviews with LA SSPs were conducted via video or phone conferencing to allow for recording. Recordings were transcribed into Microsoft Word® documents, and transcripts were uploaded into NVivo® software for coding and analysis. Consents were scanned and kept with digital records, with hard copies remaining in a locked file cabinet. All digital records (audio files, transcripts, scanned consent forms, and NVivo files) were stored in a password-secured computer. The study was approved by the University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS), the local IRB.

The interview guide included five broad topic areas. The table below summarizes the five topics and includes an example of questions in that topic.

Table 3. Interview Guide Format

Interview Topic	Sample Question
Background	What sort of training, certification, or supervision have you had to undergo to work with Latina international sex trafficking victims?
Identifying Victims	Tell me how victims become enrolled in your agency.
Certifying Victims	Explain the certification process as you understand it.
Services	What is the biggest challenge you face in providing services to victims?
Clients/Victims	Is there anything in particular about Latina victims that you feel policy-makers or other service providers should know?

Data Analyses

The unit of analysis was the text interviews with SSPs (n=12), which included Houston SSPs (n=7) and Los Angeles SSPs (n=5). The research team had an initial meeting to discuss overall reactions to the data and agree on the approach and timetable for coding. The intent of coding was to assess how this sample described their role in victim identification. Interviews were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. For triangulation the team analyzed data individually and then met 3-4 weeks after for team analysis. The team met monthly over four months.

The aim of the analysis was to explore the experiences of service providers with victim identification and certification in Houston and Los Angeles. As the study was exploratory, qualitative content analysis was used to categorize the topics of the interview guides, and guided the sampling and coding processes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In coding individual experiences, the team analyzed the manifest content in the interviews in order to describe the themes emerging from the texts. Data analyses began with specific observations of the role of particular service providers (i.e., LEAs, attorneys, and case managers) and progressed towards the emergence of a general pattern (Patton 2002). During first-level coding, the team identified text

relevant to (1) the differences in how victims are identified for services in the two cities; and (2) what type of victim was most seen by the SSPs in Houston and Los Angeles. The team discussed words and phrases respondents used to describe their roles, how they understood sex trafficking, and how these differed between cities.

As this became apparent, the team then applied a case study strategy (Yin, 2003), using within-case content analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989) in order to compare the systems in Houston and LA. In vivo codes were then used to code the different role descriptions in both cities. Second-level coding included how respondents perceived victims' experiences of trafficking and service provision. The team then assessed differences and similarities in these experiences in both cities as the overall themes. Third-level coding then developed the subthemes which emerged in regards to the differences in victim identification and similar challenges in service provision. Fourth-level coding then reassessed all texts for exemplary quotes used in the subthemes.

Results

The results are presented in two sections: Differences between cities in victim identification, and service provision challenges in both cities. Differences between cities include the protocol in identifying and enrolling victims into agencies for services and how SSPs agencies operate in working with victims. Service provision challenges in both cities include the lack of housing options, the inadequate types of housing available, and language/cultural barriers.

Differences between Houston and LA in Victim Identification

Identifying and Enrolling Victims into Agencies for Services

The most salient difference found between SSPs in Houston and LA was the protocols SSPs use to identify victims and enroll them for services in their agencies. Houston emerged as having a network of agencies, each specializing in a specific field and all working together. For instance, case management of victims in Houston was a collaborative effort by law enforcement agencies, legal offices, and service agencies which partnered to meet the needs for victim rehabilitation. In Los Angeles, on the other hand, what emerged was a co-location approach where the city's largest trafficking-specific agency housed both legal and case management departments, in addition to the statewide hotline for trafficking victims. Potential victims, law enforcement, and other social service agencies in California will call the hotline to report possible trafficking. These calls are assessed by the agency's legal department who determine if the case is human trafficking or not. If so, then victims are referred to case management within the same agency, and possibly other agencies. This LA agency's case managers estimated that 90% of their case load was enrolled through the statewide hotline, that the majority of those cases were self-reported, and most cases were victims of labor trafficking. The following table compares the steps in victim identification and service provision by city.

Table 4. Steps in Victim Identification and Service Provision by City

Steps in Victim Identification and Service Provision by City	
Los Angeles	**Houston**
Call from statewide hotline *Call is screened by hotline staff, potential victims are referred to in-house legal department*	Referral from LEA or NGO *LEA or NGO identifies potential victims and partners with network of SSPs to screen*
Legal department assesses call *Attorneys assess potential victims and decide if the case is trafficking and in need of case management referral*	Case management opens case *Once SSPs have confirmed victims, case management meets with victims and opens case*
Case management opens case	Service provision and referrals *Victims receive social services from case*

Once legal department confirms victims, case management meets with victims and opens case	*management or referrals to partner agencies for services not available at agency*
Service provision and referrals *Victims receive social services from case management or referrals to partner agencies for services not available at agency*	

Two Los Angeles respondents, LACM2 and LACM3, explained their agency's intake, certification, and enrollment process:

> LACM2: "About 95% of our clients come to us through our 24/7 hotline – the potential victim calling themselves or a service provider calling on their behalf, law enforcement calling us asking for assistance – things like that. … the call comes in through our hotline directly to social services and volunteers and we refer to our legal department, our legal staff that determine that either it turns into an emergency response or a legal intake where we have our callers go through a series of questions to determine whether or not they're eligible for our services."

> LACM3: "I've worked on the hotline, because we do have a department that takes care of and manages [victim identification]. I got direct calls from individuals who were either referred to our agency so they got information about our hotline. … most of the time we get our clients through the hotline. The legal team is in charge of determining whether they qualify to be human trafficking victims and they will certify that."

The researcher did try to recruit respondents from the agency's legal department and LA law enforcement, but all potential participants within these roles expressed that they were very busy and unable to commit the time.

Houston (and more broadly, Texas), do not have a statewide hotline for reporting suspected trafficking cases. According to Houston SSPs, most calls about suspected trafficking are made to local law enforcement (911). Houston law enforcement agents (LEAs) stated that the tips they received through calls served as their referrals, while attorneys and case managers discussed referrals from law enforcement, other agencies, and some "historical" victims – victims who were part of a case that was already investigated but were not rescued during the actual investigation or sting operation, or victims who had already left their trafficking situation and needed assistance – coming in to report. Also, the largest trafficking-specific case management agency for victims in Houston is housed as a department in a larger international services organization (Note: though it is an international services agency, it also assists domestic trafficking victims). All Houston SSPs interviewed (LEAs, attorneys, and case managers) said that they had established relationships with each other and discussed the need for collaborative, inter-agency, and coordinated service provision for victims. One of the LEAs described this process as necessary to providing cultural competence and options specific to Houston cases:

> "The proactive cases take a lot of work and it's typical [to investigate] for one to two years. If you look at [recent sting operation] and ask [investigator], that was a long term investigation that the law enforcement community came over several times saying, 'We think we've got something.' … Every community has unique cultural and historical issues within that community that you need to formulate a task force to address the specifics of your community. I think that every community has human trafficking and

every community must rely on the experts in that community to address it and you have to address it with the use of multiple agencies. You have to know who your NGOs are and get to know them."

The second LEA also discussed the inter-agency and cultural factors as key.

> "[In Houston] it's more that we work hand in hand with investigators – whether it be FBI, ICE – whenever we get into the case, generally from the very beginning. We work hand in hand in moving forward with the prosecution. And most of the time I'll interview the victim and get a feel for credibility and the mental situation encountering, so especially on the international side involving Latinas, I think – well I'm bilingual so it helps tremendously in talking to the victims. But I also think that if the victim does not believe you're genuine they're going to pick up on it immediately."

While partnering with law enforcement is an established part of the Houston process, one LA-based case manager, LACM4, did mention the gap in partnering with law enforcement in Los Angeles, which can result in victims going unidentified and not receiving needed services:

> "Not all of our clients come through the hotline. About 90% of our clients come through the hotline so the other 10% would be referrals from other NGOs or other legal agencies that we work with. [*Interviewer: What about referrals from law enforcement investigating a case?*] Sometimes law enforcement, if we're not working an operation with them, will still call our hotline. So with law enforcement it depends. Sometimes they call us directly or we're involved in the operation directly, and sometimes they call the hotline. … But also a big area for us is law enforcement not identifying them as victims; law enforcement criminalizing them rather than treating them as a victim and so then we

never get to have contact with them, either because we don't get called by law enforcement: There's never even an opportunity for us to have that interaction with a client because they're not seen as a victim."

Thus, in Houston law enforcement participates in the identification of many of the victims, while in LA victim identification was seen as the legal department's responsibility. In fact, law enforcement investigations were rarer in LA, according to the SSPs. One LA case manager (LACM1) discussed how the role of the case manager is subject to the legal department identifying victims. LACM1 states:

"Our legal department are the ones who then conduct an intake and then they are the ones who decide, based on the case, if they are in fact victims. … for social services, we can make sure because we don't do anything until legal confirms they are and they are going to take the case or they are just going to a law agency. So it really all varies."

Houston attorneys also discussed the referral system they used within the collaborative system: HOUSLEG1:

"But most of the clients we've served throughout the years were referrals to us through law enforcement because it comes across and when it's a case, when it comes across, we schedule an intake and right away start working with them."

An attorney at a different legal office, HOULEG3, explained the same process and described the inter-agency network. HOULEG3 stated that both Houston-based legal offices represented in this study refer legal cases to each other as well as case management to other service agencies. When asked how this affected referrals or helped with service provision HOULEG3 discussed the need for collaborations saying:

> "I think there's been an effort for a lot more multi-agency communication, even between DHS, FBI, Sheriff's office, HPD. They are kind of trying to move and have a department working on trafficking into the FBI building – which is kind of exciting!"

The Houston SSPs who most discussed how collaboration of service providers assists in victim identification and services were the case managers. HOUCM1 had recently moved to the Houston trafficking-specific agency from a trafficking-specific agency in California. HOUCM1 discussed the referrals and networking in Houston while describing the difficulty in identifying historical victims:

> "Well there are different ways because, according to my understanding, if there was a big trafficking [investigation], they could be referred by law enforcement to us through being detained in these raids. And that seemed to be more straight forward because they were found in that situation. Law enforcement believed they were actually victims from the very beginning. But then … we had walk-ins, who were maybe friends of victims whom we had worked with in the past who had been in [the same trafficking] situation in the past but maybe hadn't been there on that day or hadn't been involved in the [investigation] but learned about the program and came in – which seemed to be slightly more problematic because they hadn't been found in that situation by a law enforcement official. So they had to prove that they were in those locations, that they were part of that case, that they were part of that situation. Because obviously you have to prove it and you're not going to have documentation that says you're a victim. So there were different ways that people came into [case management]. … referral from law enforcement, referral from friends…"

HOUCM2 worked in trafficking-specific agencies in two Texas cities and compared identification and service provision experiences in both. When asked about challenges in identifying victims, HOUCM2 compared the Houston system favorably and also stated that the collaborative service coordination affords victims more culturally competent options. Also discussed was how case management assists in identifying victims and is aware of the individual stories of their caseload:

> "I think the challenge is when law enforcement cannot identify them. They may still will [sic] qualify even though law enforcement doesn't give them the certification but it's still a struggle between law enforcement and [case management] of how a victim is identified. … I think law enforcement has a different mindset about what a victim should look like. … I feel law enforcement will look at their case as general. Sometimes the victim may tell us more than they tell the law enforcement whether it be true, whether it is not true – there is more trust with the service provider. So they will not share information with law enforcement and that would cause an issue with them being certified. So that is an issue. *[Interviewer: Do you mean that law enforcement might see a prostitution ring when it might be trafficking?*] Yes. I think it is just that they are law enforcement, and they are trying to build a case – trying to prosecute. So that is their mindset and the framework that they go by. … there are a lot of cases I've seen where [law enforcement] do identify, of course. When I worked in [other city], it was different than working here in Houston. In Houston, law enforcement has it more together in being able to identify a victim than in [other city]. … I just didn't have a good relationship with – I had more of a relationship with [local police] but not federal agents – which is very hard to service my clients, having someone that can apply for continued presence and things like that. There,

> I guess they were still learning I guess, and training. There were times where they called me to a raid so that I can help them with the interview process. Or my coworkers within the agency, they were still learning a lot about how to screen for trafficking."

When asked if the collaborative approach made it more difficult for victims than the one-agency system, HOUCM2 said,

> "I have had some clients who have difficulties in differentiating the roles of different roles. But these kinds, that do partnership with the other agencies so well, we can actually have meetings. We can all sit together where she or he can see all of the faces and say, 'Look, we deal with the benefits. If you have trouble getting your [registration] from [the consulate], you can speak to [case management],' or, 'If you have an issue with your T-visa, that goes with your attorney,' and we are all sitting at the same table so that they understand."

The protocol used in victim identification in Houston and LA also impacted SSPs caseloads in each city, in particular the type of cases assigned. Key to this difference was how victims were reported or referred for services. Specific to this study's focus, Houston SSPs stated seeing many cases of foreign-born Latina victims of sex trafficking, particularly in Latino sex networks and cantinas. Los Angeles SSPs stated that calls from foreign-born Latina victims of sex trafficking (and, therefore, cases) were not common to the hotline and SSPs were not aware if such cases were being investigated by law enforcement (however, as discussed in the introduction to this paper, these cases are seen in LA and reported to the NHTRC).

LACM4 managed the hotline cases and reported a monthly average of 80-85 calls, emphasizing that the majority are potential victims. LACM1, who worked in a trafficking-

specific agency, stated that from those calls, the agency's case manager caseloads (total, not just foreign-born Latinas trafficked for sex) were capped at 20, but currently averaged 12-15 for all SSPs at her agency. LACM1 added that cases remained open between one to three years. This was echoed by other case managers from the same agency. However, in the agency where LACM5 works cases were open for a shorter period of time, which was attributed to lack of funding for services. When asked about the most difficult challenge faced in providing services, LACM5 explains:

> "We're averaging between 12-13 [cases] at a time. … Most typically when they're pre-certified, probably around 6-9 months. … I would say most of the year, we average 9 months. … I feel like, and again, this goes back to that we only have one source of funding at this time. We haven't been able to secure any other funding yet. So it's short term and so for these clients, especially those just getting out of the trafficking, short term can be really hard because a lot of times our funding allows us to have multiple contact if they're able to trust us – which is a really big deal. And for a lot of them, the fact that we have to discharge them so quickly usually, before they secure employment or a sustainable lifestyle, it can be really difficult because after they're certified, as far as employment services go, it's difficult creating sustainability for them within a short period of time and that's really hard because we do have to discharge them because even if it's 9 months to a year, they just got certification and work authorization. They don't have jobs yet. So I'm having to discharge clients who don't have the ability to pay rent on their own. … I guess, for our program, it would be nice for it to be more long term just because trust has to be built for them to talk about what their real needs are."

LACM5 stated that her agency also gets clients referred from the state hotline, law enforcement, and other agencies as well. However, LACM5 estimated the agency's caseload to be 50% referrals from law enforcement and agencies, and 50% from calls, and also said half of the caseload was labor and half was sex trafficking cases:

> "Once they call, it isn't particularly difficult for us to identify in the way that we don't take that role fully. We have a screening [survey] which will help us know if, based on what we understand, they're a victim of human trafficking. At that point we will refer them to an attorney of [the trafficking-specific agency legal department] or the legal aid foundation will do the full screening for us because we're not attorneys. We don't feel qualified to do that. … It's really hard for us to identify someone as a victim of trafficking because most people will think what is happening to them is either something that they're choosing or that they've chosen at some point in time, even if it's not the things that they were getting into but they're not necessarily identifying as a victim a lot of times. So it's hard to call for help if they're not identifying themselves."

Houston case management and legal services SSPs estimated that the majority of their caseloads came through referrals from law enforcement or other agencies and were typically split 60% sex trafficking and 40% labor trafficking. Moreover, in Houston the caseloads of case managers, who work primarily with foreign-born victims, averaged about 30 and, depending on funding, cases could remain open for up to 5 years. Caseloads for Houston LEAs varied at any given time depending on the cases currently being investigated or prosecuted. Whereas for case managers one case equaled one person, for LEAs a case could include between 1 victim and over 100 victims who are part of the investigation or the case being prosecuted. Cases remain open throughout the investigation and prosecution, both of which can take years.

All three Houston attorneys endorsed similar averages for their caseloads and turnaround. HOULEG1 best exemplified this:

> "Usually for an attorney it's between 50 to 75 cases. That is really the standard of practice. … If they were referred through law enforcement, they usually [are granted] continued presence [legal status], so I would say 6-8 months that I would stay with these cases."

Working with Victims

When asked about working with foreign-born Latinas and any possible red flags or trends that could be seen as identifiers for other victims, LACM1 expressed unfamiliarity with case specifics saying,

> "Honestly, from the social service stand point, we do not know our clients' full story, really; the whole trafficking situation, unless our clients tell us their stories. I just know the basics, what the attorney tells us, but the specific situations I do not know firsthand because I do not need to know in order to give them resources. But other than that, I only know the stories for those clients who are close to me but many of the case managers do not know the whole stories and we do not need to know that in order to help them get the services that they need. [*Interviewer: So the service providers who would know would be* –] The legal department - they know the whole trafficking situation."

HOUCM2, on the other hand, viewed the approach that the case managers used as more personal and open with the client and that getting to know them and their story is necessary in best helping them:

"With the victim, we are trying to focus on them. In our interview, in our questions – we are looking just at them since the day they were born until the day they were referred. So we see it as a systems approach, but in how everything affects being a victim."

A summary of the emerging differences in service provision by city is compared in the table below.

Table 5. Differences in Service Provision by City

Differences in Service Provision by City	
Los Angeles	**Houston**
Trafficking-specific agency	Trafficking-specific department within larger agency
Statewide trafficking hotline	No local hotline utilized
90% (est.) of victims at agency are self-reported	Most referrals from LEAs or NGOs
Majority are labor trafficking cases	Split between sex and labor trafficking cases
Sex trafficking cases are mostly domestic	Sex trafficking cases are mostly foreign-born (Latina)
Case management not very familiar with clients' cases	Case management are very familiar with clients' cases

Service Provision Challenges in both Houston and LA

Lack of Housing Options

When asked about challenges in providing services and access to resources, the biggest theme was housing, both the availability of and type of housing with both Houston and LA SSPs. The importance of first securing housing in order to serve clients was discussed and the lack of available and immediate shelter in both cities was mentioned by 10 out of 12 SSPs in the study (the 2 that did not mention it were law enforcement).

The urgency and immediacy in finding shelter was discussed. In LA, the high cost of housing and lack of resources was the most discussed. LACM3 says,

> "We do have a lack of resources when it comes to affordable housing. … housing is one of the biggest barriers for them to move forward because it's so hard to find affordable housing here in LA."

When asked what their biggest challenge in service provision was, LACM4 addressed the frustration with not being able to offer housing stating,

> "It's challenging when I want to be able to help somebody but either they're not willing to engage in services or there are just no services out there for them - like no shelters have space. It's just really hard to deal with that - that desire to help and then sometimes just not being able to do anything."

The inability to offer victims resources was also addressed by LACM2 who discussed not only frustration with lacking resources for victims at their agency, but having to deny potential victims any assistance because housing cannot be immediately met:

> "We actually have callers from out of state that call to our hotline and they're like, 'I'm a victim, please help me. I want to go to LA,' and we're like, 'No don't come here,' and the reason why we say don't come here is that there are no shelters. Unless you have someone here and you can crash on their couch – I can give you references and a number to the homeless shelters, but they're not going to have something overnight. We're at capacity with our shelters here."

Houston attorneys and LA case managers discussed the urgency of emergency response cases – victims who have just been rescued from their trafficking situation – and their immediate need for shelter. HOULEG2 stated that settling housing first helped the process of service provision saying,

> "A lot of the time what's paramount is eating and having a place to sleep and to be safe. So I think that part is really the most crucial, at least at the beginning."

HOULEG3 discussed the urgency for shelter so that the victim is not kept at risk of trafficking saying,

> "I think housing a lot of times can fall into place. But housing, obviously, is also an unmet need and it throws our clients back into pockets of vulnerability because those are the only networks they have. So housing hasn't been resolved."

LACM2 addressed shelter as the first need stating,

> "But the ones that we do get that are straight out of their situation, that don't know anyone here – we have to find from the beginning, from the very beginning – before we can even discuss things like therapy or education or them dropping off their resume – is we need shelter for them. And so one of the biggest barriers is shelter. We don't have shelters for our clients."

Inadequate Types of Housing Available

The need for trafficking-specific housing and shelter options for victims was discussed. HOULEG1 discussed the need for trafficking-specific housing so that victims would not have to be "detained" by law enforcement or similar settings but rather have a safe house for their needs,

> "…what I felt was really missing in Houston was having a shelter. A real shelter – because law enforcement always kept saying because they're not put in proceedings and there's no hold against them, we cannot keep them and we cannot protect them. Which, at the same time, I understand but you don't want to be kind of detaining a victim. What I

felt was missing was having a center with people that were trained in order to identify the kinds of barriers and sense of shame."

HOUCM2 made a similar statement regarding trafficking-specific needs at a shelter saying,

> "I think if there was a home for these ladies, whether it be temporary or full time, it could really help them to have someone there; to be with them while they are learning to be self-sufficient and learning how to live on their own for the first time."

SSPs in Houston and LA mentioned both homeless and domestic violence shelters, though domestic violence shelters were discussed as not being a good option for victims of sex trafficking, and, in particular, foreign-born victims. In discussing the need for trafficking-specific services (both housing and mental health were mentioned under the topic), the inadequacy of servicing foreign-born victims of sex trafficking with domestic violence models were discussed. HOULEG1 addressed the differences in the domestic violence and sex trafficking experiences and the shame she observed with foreign-born trafficking victims:

> "I think what is missing is having real shelters that provide overall support for these victims in all of their needs because lots of times they just need to deal through stuff. And we've tried having some of them go to the domestic violence shelters and even though there is a similarity between the victimization, I didn't think it worked for them too. It was a very different dynamic because there's that extra fear and I think when it comes to this, there's more shame than there is in domestic violence. … My concern is that I don't want them to ever forget the international victims. Because there is a tendency sometimes [to say], 'They're undocumented, they broke the law, they're not ours,' so to me, a lot of

my work and advocacy continues to be around that just because I feel there are few voices that speak for them."

When asked what services were lacking for victims they work with, LACM5 stated that domestic violence shelters are one of the only and most often used options for shelter, though the model used for victims of domestic violence (DV) and the clientele in the shelters was inadequate in helping foreign-born victims of sex trafficking:

> "Well, something everyone identifies whenever we get together is housing. A lot of these clients end up in emergency housing situations, at least in the beginning. And the only shelters I have referrals, or which other people in this area have referrals for that I know of, which would be even somewhat appropriate for [sex trafficking victims] are not so much appropriate for international [victims] because they're DV shelters and generally for families. So there's a lot of regulations put in place with the housing that's available that don't work for the international survivors – around diet and just cultural things that aren't understood – and shelters aren't flexible in those things. And so all the clients that I've put in those shelters have left. Most of the shelters who can take survivors of sex trafficking are those who work with domestic violence victims – and those, generally, are going to be a lot of domestic (U.S.-born) survivors, or domestic victims. For international victims, that's really hard because [the shelters] don't have language capacity, they require them to eat food that they don't normally eat and that makes them really uncomfortable, and they're not very sensitive to cultural differences. Not specifically, I mean even the other tenants, but not even the staff. So that's been hard because it's so hard to find them appropriate shelter, and then especially like the really quick ones – like a 24 hour shelter. We only have one that we know that we can refer to, and so if that one

happens to be full, then we have to pay for hotels, which is a waste of [the victim's] funds. So that's the one main thing because when somebody ends up in an emergency situation, it's the housing that's a problem and once their housing situation is stable we can work on everything else. …but if they're in danger, it's not good to put them in a random hotel somewhere in town so we really do need some safe places for them that are culturally appropriate."

When asked if training on working with trafficking victims might help, LACM5 continued saying that it is not just a training on trafficking issue, but also of cultural competence, structure and protocol because even those shelters who work with sex trafficking victims tend to focus on domestic victims:

"I would think so … but I think [DV shelters] that we refer to are almost all, for them, domestic [victims] and their issues are very different. They're working with a lot of sex trafficking victims who have pimps and have gone through a lot of emotional, psychological abuse and manipulation. Where I find a lot of our clients, there's obviously been some of that, but a lot more of the abuse has been either physical or threats towards their families or immigration status, deportation, that kind of thing that was controlling them. So they're not as much as a flight risk, whereas a lot of these shelters treat them like – you know, they can't have cell phones, they can't do a lot of things, they have very, very little freedom, which our clients – it's not helpful for them because it looks like trafficking. It's that same kind of control that they had with their trafficker where they didn't have rights to go out, to have communication. Again. We're putting them in that same atmosphere again – for their safety, because we don't have another option. But it's not a positive place for them because they feel they're with traffickers again rather than

being protected, so it's very different, a domestic situation versus an international situation. And again cultural competency – the shelters we know of, they don't have much cultural competency. Truthfully, they don't have policies in place to allow our clients to eat food from their countries or, they just don't know very much – which is why most of the clients leave."

Language and Cultural Barriers

Cultural and language competency were discussed in the needs for adequate housing as well as in overall investigation and service provision. Of 12 SSPs, 3 identified as Latino or Hispanic (1 LA, 2 Houston), and 8 reported speaking fluent Spanish (3 LA, 5 Houston). Being able to speak Spanish or identifying as Latin/Hispanic were seen as strengths by those who were able to identify with foreign-born Latina victims on some level. HOULE1 stated,

> "I am Latino and I speak the language that perhaps somebody in my position that doesn't know the culture and that doesn't know the language would feel they need help in some area."

HOUCM2 also addressed this saying,

> "I speak fluent Spanish … My parents are immigrants. They came in the 80's to the U.S. So I know some of the things that they must be going through, being raised in an immigrant family."

When asked if being a Spanish-speaker affects their caseload, LACM1 stated,

> "Yeah, in a positive way, in that given that I am a Spanish-speaker, and most of the clients are Spanish-speaking so I'm a big asset to the organization, just helping them with our Spanish clients."

LACM5, a Spanish-speaker, also discussed how it affected their work saying,

> "We do have our translators that I request – African nations or other Asian countries. A couple other random places but those would be the main places. Most of my clients – not most, a lot – are from different Spanish-speaking countries; mostly Central America. I had one client from South America, but almost all of them have been from Central American countries – so Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala."

SSPs who did not identify as Latin/Hispanic and did not speak fluent Spanish discussed their inabilities as well as the overall lack of linguistically and culturally competent services. In discussing the lack of proper housing and mental health options for foreign-born victims, HOULEG1 stated,

> "…if it's the language then we try – well with Spanish it's not really a problem. But in Central America, you have some of the languages that very few people could use [indigenous languages] – this would be also an issue. I think also finding bilingual experts that can provide counseling is a huge, huge issue."

LACM3 also discussed the option of translators, saying,

> "We do offer that here, but culturally they are limited to access counseling and services. So that's a struggle, but we definitely try to find places that are culturally sensitive and people that speak their language so they're able to connect with them."

HOUCM1 discussed how not being able to speak the language or identify culturally sometimes hindered connecting with clients, though she considered being a woman an asset:

> "So the thing for me was that, because I was communicating with them in English, our communication was not as deep as with the other women because, you know, we as women we chat. So I had much more a feel for their lives and what they felt about things and I guess that's what I mean. I can pass more judgement, whereas with non-native speakers, my interactions were much more superficial."

When asked about the importance of linguistic or cultural competence, HOUCM1 continued by saying that these things need to be taken into consideration not only in training for SSPs, but should be considered in policy and included gender. In discussing the assessment and interview processes, she said,

> "I think it just exaggerates it when you grow up in a culture that says sex is shameful and it shouldn't be out of marriage and it should be with only one man and I think that that just needs to be understood by all practitioners. There needs to be more sensitivity to that and especially, and I know that it can't always be the case, but I really feel like it'll be helpful if that first point of contact with law enforcement was a woman. I mean preferably. I know it's hard, but preferably a bilingual woman, maybe from a similar culture, with some level of understanding and maybe not a man just for the sake of their comfort and being able to speak more freely. And I know that that's an unreasonable thing to ask, but I know that a reaction from most of the victims, as soon as you'd say it was going to be a guy [interviewing], they feel like it's bad enough talking to a guy but

then he's going to ask me questions? So yeah, in terms of culture, I think that's something that should definitely be taken up towards law."

Discussion

Latina victims of sex trafficking face traumatic events while possibly not being able to fully understand or communicate their victimization to others. Though law enforcement investigates and prosecutes their cases, service provision is necessary in helping them rehabilitate and renew their lives. Since different services and resources are necessary, collaboration with various agencies in efforts of coordinated case management is vital in assuring victims that SSPs are working to meet their needs.

Differences in protocol in identifying victims and enrolling them in service provision in Houston and LA emerged in terms of which victims are being identified and how victims access services. As LA has a statewide hotline which puts potential victims directly in contact with a trafficking-specific service agency, victims were able to self-report directly to SSPs. The resulting caseload represented more victims of labor trafficking than sex. The control and isolation experienced by victims of sex trafficking could be a contributing factor in their being less represented by the self-reported caseload. The agency networking and coordinated case management referral system in victim identification and service provision in Houston – and LACM5's non trafficking-specific agency – resulted in more even representation of both sex and labor trafficking victims (though sex trafficking was seen as most investigated) as well as cases which were referred and self-reported.

As LA and Houston both have high rates of human trafficking of Latina victims, the task forces and agencies involved could benefit from aspects of the different protocols being used in

both cities. A trafficking-specific service agency in Houston to which potential victims had direct access to self-report might help increase the identification of labor trafficking victims as reflected in the LA caseload. A more collaborative network for coordinated case management, often led by law enforcement's investigations, could help increase the identification of Latino sex network cases or trafficking rings as reflected by the Houston caseload. A system comprising of victims' opportunity to self-report and agencies who collaborate in service provision offers a more holistic approach in investigating and identifying victims – especially the more vulnerable, such as foreign-born victims.

The lack of housing and availability of linguistically and culturally competent services in both cities reflects the need for trafficking-specific services and its funding. California and Texas differ in housing cost and state-funded resources, yet the same issues were seen as the biggest challenges in properly providing services to Latina victims in both states' largest cities. Housing is seen as a victim's most immediate need, followed by the need to remove language and cultural barriers in proper service provision. Failure to address these two elements jeopardizes the chances of offering the best rehabilitation to victims, even after identification is successful. In order to best assist victims in transitioning from trafficking after their rescue, both cities demonstrate the need for a more fluid and supported process of identifying and investigating victims, then transitioning to secure housing and proper service provision which considers their language, culture, and trauma unique to their trafficking experience.

Implications for Policy

Consideration of funding for available housing and proper services is necessary at both the state and federal levels in order to rehabilitate victims of trafficking. Case managers and

social workers in particular can advocate for their clients, caseloads, agencies, and communities in voicing the lack of resources and needed attention for international victims of trafficking. Funding alone, however, will not address the challenges expressed by the SSPs working with Latina victims of sex trafficking. Once housing and linguistically and culturally competent services are available, training on trafficking-specific trauma and needs is necessary. Houston law enforcement stated a Texas policy for mandatory training. However, other Houston SSPs were not required to receive training, though some agencies did offer it. Based on the differing protocols, case managers in LA stated they were not familiar with the histories or experiences of their cases while all Houston SSPs knew the stories of each case and all Houston SSPs were involved in identifying victims at different times.

Mandatory training for social service providers, including law enforcement who investigate, attorneys who assist victims and prosecute traffickers, medical and mental health providers who treat victims, and case managers or social workers who coordinate victim services – all considered first responders to victims' situations – should be enforced at the state level for a more uniform effort in properly servicing victims and allocating state resources to anti-trafficking agencies and their caseloads.

Article Three: The Victims as The Supply

"*This is the fear they want to escape":* Latina Victims' Experience of Sex Trafficking

Introduction/Literature

The U.S. is one of the leading destination countries for international victims of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual and labor exploitation (United States Department of State, 2014). Estimated numbers of international victims trafficked in the U.S. have varied since the initial TVPA first suggested 50,000 but reduced the number to 18,000 and again to 14,500 during subsequent reauthorizations of TVPRAs. Though there has since been a general consensus that the annual number of international victims to be roughly 17,500 these shifting numbers question the reliability of estimates provided by the Department of State and could potentially affect the availability of resources offered to victims of trafficking (Clawson, Layne, & Small, 2006). In fact, the vast majority of victims go unidentified (United States Department of State, 2010). According to the Department of Justice, only 0.4% of the assumed number of victims of sex trafficking in the U.S. are actually identified. These national statistics demonstrate a significant need for better victim identification processes (Department of Justice, 2010).

Immigration from Central America to the U.S. by way of Mexico has increased over the past decade (Alba, 2013), and an estimated one third of the victims trafficked into the U.S. annually come from Latin America, with the majority of them entering by way of Mexico (Alba, 2013). Victims of sex trafficking are highly vulnerable along the U.S./Mexico border due to the high rates of unemployment, thousands of annual American tourists entering Mexico for the purpose of purchasing sex (in red light districts popular in Tijuana and Juarez), and the increased violence along the border (Ugarte, Zarate, & Farley, 2003; Albuja, 2014).

Since the Mexican government began its war on drugs in 2006, an estimated 50,000 people have been killed as violence in Mexico has reached crisis levels (Albuja, 2014). Human trafficking in Mexico has increased as drug cartels have become involved in trafficking people in addition to drugs and arms (Albuja, 2014; Guinn, 2008). Thus the risks for Mexican and Latin American immigrants entering the U.S. continues to increase as Mexico and its neighboring countries suffer from Mexico's nationwide state of emergency (Albuja, 2014). Deeply rooted and centuries old gender inequalities affecting education and employment opportunities, along with a weakened legal state in Mexico only exacerbate these vulnerabilities faced by Latinas who are from or immigrating through Mexico (Risley, 2010).

In response to these high rates of trafficking, the Texas Office of the Attorney General (OAG) created a human trafficking task force in 2009. In their most recent (2012) report on human trafficking, this task force recommended that prevention, prosecution, and public education efforts in Texas focus on stopping the demand for victims of trafficking. This approach disproportionally focuses on identifying and prosecuting men who purchase sex and as such are seen as fueling the demand for victims of trafficking. As a result, the prosecution of traffickers and the needs of victims are not proportionally emphasized.

A key impetus for this study are specific cases of sex trafficking in Houston, Texas, where *cantinas* – working class neighborhood bars that mostly employ undocumented women and caters to Latino men (Fernandez-Esquer & Agoff, 2012) – are prevalent. In 2008, the Houston Police Department received a call from a Latina victim of sex trafficking being kept in a local cantina, resulting in a major investigation (Olsen, 2008). Similar situations occurred in other cases in Houston in 2011, where the traffickers, victims, and consumers were all from Latin America (or of Latino descent), the sex acts occurred at local *cantinas*, and law

enforcement were notified by Latina victims who were assisted by Latino consumers (Olsen, 2008; Olsen, 2011). Many of the women rescued from these cases in Houston are still undergoing the TVPA process of being certified, receiving services, and awaiting prosecution of their traffickers. Therefore, this study focused specifically on the experiences of women involved in Latino sex networks in Houston. Considering the high rates of Latino sex trafficking networks – categorized by the NHTRC as closed networks targeting Latino consumers and trafficking Latina women in *cantinas,* commercial-front brothels, or residential brothels in Latin enclaves – in Houston (Polaris Project, 2011), factors specific to these environments, populations, and situations will be explored.

Methods

This study employed a pragmatic utilitarian framework to interview three populations of stakeholders about their experiences in the Latino sex network in Houston cantinas. According to Patton (2002), the pragmatic method allows for flexibility when qualitative research uses alternative strategies in an ethical manner. As this study focused on Latina victims who had been trafficked for sex in Houston cantinas, the study used a case study strategy (Yin, 2003; Hartley, 2004; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The unit of analysis is qualitative interviews (n=20) with members of Latino sex networks. As such, stakeholders impacted by potential sex trafficking within Latino sex networks were identified, including the men who frequent these networks, the service providers who investigate the traffickers and assist victims, and the victims of the traffickers within the network. The study was approved by the University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS), which is the local Institutional Review Board.

Participants

The study used a combination of criterion sampling to determine which stakeholders had the most importance in exploring experiences of sex trafficking in Latino sex networks (Patton, 2001) and snowball sampling in order to recruit hidden populations within the networks (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997). For inclusion in the study, respondents (n=20) identified as being either 1) a foreign-born Latina who has been identified as a victim of sex trafficking and is currently enrolled in services (n=9); 2) an investigator, case worker, or lawyer for foreign-born Latina sex trafficking victims (n=7), or; 3) a male immigrant from Latin America who has frequented a *cantina* in the last 3 years and endorsed a preference for Latina commercial sex workers (n=4). Victims were referred by case workers and attorneys who were contacted by the researcher about the study. Service providers were recruited by the researcher at their agencies or were referred by their colleagues who participated as respondents. Male participants (referred to as "clients" by the victims and "johns" by service providers) were recruited by the researcher at labor sites and cantinas, or voluntarily contacted the researcher for an interview when referred by another participant (social worker, victim, or other male immigrant respondent). The total participant breakdown is illustrated below.

Table 1. Study Participants

Participants	n
Victims (n=9)	
El Salvador	2
Honduras	4
Mexico	2
Nicaragua	1
Social Service Providers (n=7)	
Attorney	3
Case Manager	2
Law Enforcement	2
Men (n=4)	
El Salvador	1
Honduras	1

Mexico	2
TOTAL Participants	20

Data Collection

All data collection forms and interviews for service providers were in English, while all forms and interviews for victims and the male clients were in Spanish. Standardized open-ended interview guides were developed so that participants could share as much detail about their experiences and perceptions as they would like (Turner, 2010). This interview design provides rich narratives, which can make data analysis arduous as the researcher needs to comb the data to provide an accurate reflection of the overall perspective (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Because the primary researcher had previous experience volunteering with anti-trafficking efforts (see Ethical Concerns) and because this study involved multiple participants and sample groups, this design helped to reduce researcher bias within the study (Gall, et al., 2003; Turner, 2010).

As the study followed a pragmatic framework (Patton, 2002), the interviews for the victims used elements of Josselson's (2013) suggested narrative approach to inquiry to invite personal accounts and encourage intimate sharing when discussing sensitive topics such as their experience of being trafficked. Considering the possibility of trauma, this approach to the interviews with victims helped to establish a comfortable relational style of interviewing that would encourage narrative accounts from various viewpoints (Josselson, 2013). All study interview guides covered a variety of topics germane to the role of each participant, but all respondents were asked about their understanding of the process of identifying Latina victims of sex trafficking. Interview guides had topics chosen to describe the perceptions and experiences of each group of stakeholders; to define their roles in Latino sex networks; and to illustrate their knowledge of proper victim identification.

Service providers and victims who have been identified and are receiving services could be assumed to know about trafficking. Interviews with the male clients, on the other hand, included informing respondents of the legal definitions of human trafficking and only the men were asked if they knew what sex trafficking is, as it could not be assumed that they were familiar with the topic. Victims were asked about their trafficking experience, their understanding of the identification and certification processes, and what helped them leave their trafficking situation. Service providers were asked about their training and experience, descriptions of their cases, and what helps or hinders in rehabilitating victims. Male clients were first asked about their experiences, perceptions, and preferences and then about their understanding of human trafficking. The men were also given brochures in Spanish from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services describing human trafficking and then asked if this information related to their experiences in cantinas. Interviews were de-identified and the victims and men were assigned aliases in all audio recordings and subsequent transcripts. Service providers were identified by their job title (e.g., case manager, immigration attorney, etc.). Recordings were transcribed and assessed with all digital records remaining in a password-secured computer.

Data Analyses

The research team consisted of the primary researcher (a female social work PhD candidate with a background in human trafficking) and two research assistants (one male Master of Sociology student with no background in human trafficking and one female Master of Social Work with some training on human trafficking). All three are bilingual, bicultural, and binational Mexican-Americans. The primary researcher collected all the data and the two research assistants transcribed interviews verbatim into Microsoft Word® documents. In order to fully

understand the different questions asked of stakeholders and their experiences, all team members listened to all audios and read all interview transcripts, regardless of which audios they transcribed individually. The first participant group to complete interviews was the social service providers, followed by the victims; the final participant group interviewed was the men.

The primary researcher reviewed all transcripts for any missing text data due to inaudible or misunderstood audio data. The unit of analysis was the 20 text interviews which were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The Word documents containing the transcribed interviews were uploaded into NVivo® software for data analysis. The research team held an initial meeting to discuss the content of the audio files. This initial discussion was a broader conversation during which the research team accomplished several tasks. First, team members shared their overall reactions to the data. Second, the two research assistants who transcribed the interviews identified passages in the audio files that they considered difficult to comprehend. The primary researcher then listened to these passages to try to determine what the challenge was. For instance, whether the respondent had used an acronym, or street language, or whether it was simply that the audio recorder failed to accurately capture what was said (i.e., the segment was inaudible). Most of the challenges were related to language usage. Very few were the result of inaudible segments (for example, the respondent suddenly lowering his/her voice and becoming momentarily inaudible). The third task accomplished by the research team at this initial meeting was to discuss the approach and timeline for coding and analyzing the data. For triangulation purposes the team decided that each of the three team members would analyze data individually and then meet 3-4 weeks after for team analysis. The team met monthly over four months.

The team used a content analysis approach. The aim of the analysis was to explore the different experiences with Latino sex networks. In coding individual experiences and perceptions

of each sample group (i.e., victims, service providers, and men who visited cantinas to purchase sex), the team analyzed the manifest content in the interviews in order to describe the themes present in the transcripts. Analysis began with specific observations of the trafficking experience of foreign-born Latina victims across the sample groups and progressed towards the emergence of a general pattern (Patton 2002). The pattern that emerged was the fear tactics used by traffickers to control foreign-born Latinas in Latino sex networks (namely Houston cantinas). The team then used a case study strategy (Yin, 2003), using within-case content analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989) to describe the experience in these hidden and closed networks.

First-level coding explored how each sample group described their own role in the Latino sex networks and how they perceived the role of other stakeholders in Latino sex networks and trafficking (e.g. how men view victims and how victims view the service providers). The team discussed words and phrases which respondents used to describe these roles and how participants understood sex trafficking, which gave rise to in vivo codes for role descriptions. Second-level coding included how each group described the trafficking experience of victims. Third-level coding then developed the overall themes emerging from all texts and how they synergized them in regards to the victims' trafficking experience. The team then realized that all sample groups discussed the fear tactics used by sex traffickers in Latino sex networks. Fourth-level coding then consisted of reassessing all texts for proper in vivo text that represented the themes.

According to Yin (2003), using a case study strategy explores distinct situations with various variables of interest rather than data points and relies on multiple sources of evidence. Although the research can employ various methods, the case study strategy is preferred when the inquiry is "how" or "why" and the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context (Yin, 2003). In this paper, the real-life context is the Latino sex networks in Houston and

how victims are trafficked and in cantinas. The contemporary phenomenon that emerged is that fear tactics used by traffickers affected all stakeholders involved in identifying Latina victims of sex trafficking. Thus, a case study strategy was used to explore this phenomenon of fear tactics within Latino sex networks as it emerged from the interviews throughout the coding process.

Ethical Concerns

The primary researcher has volunteered with both human trafficking and Latino labor organizations in Houston for 7 years and has earned the trust of the communities. The primary researcher had no prior communication with any of the victims or male clients, but had previously known one of the service providers (Houston attorney). Aside from discussing the T-visa process with victims, immigration status was not directly asked of any victim or male client respondents, though most alluded to being undocumented at some point. Because of this, safety measures were taken into consideration of both the respondents and the researcher. Respondents were assured of confidentiality, given the option to be interviewed at their preferred location, and all data was de-identified. The primary researcher, a female, was always accompanied by a male colleague and reported location and contact information to a second colleague when interviewing at labor sites or cantinas. Seven male client respondents withdrew or were dropped from the study after initial screening, either for fear of being reported or deported, or for safety concerns of the primary researcher.

Results

Fear of their trafficker as experienced by victims varied by the type of tactic used, the tactic itself, and whether it was experienced during or after the trafficking situation. Threats experienced by victims ranged from affecting them emotionally, physically, or legally. Also, an unanticipated topic that emerged was how traffickers also used these tactics against the male

clients. Therefore, the results are presented as subheadings in two sections. The Victims' Fear of Retribution section includes: Emotional, Death Threats against Family; Emotional, Death Threats against the Victims; Physical, Beatings and Rape; and Legal, Threats of Deportation. The Traffickers vs. Clients section includes: Fearing the Male Clients and Risks for Clients.

Victims' Fear of Retribution

Different fear tactics were used by traffickers and the fear described by victims varied by degrees, situation, and whether it was during or after trafficking situation. The main theme that surfaced from the data was that victims often did not escape their situation due to a fear of retribution. Some of those who did escape were coerced back into the situation by the same fear tactics. Though all respondents were out of their trafficking situation at the time of interview, most remained fearful of their trafficker or struggled with flashbacks during their processes of rehabilitation or restoration.

The results are, then, presented as what the research team found to be the most common fear tactics used by traffickers with these victims: death threats to family, death threats to victims, threats of deportation, and beatings/rape. They are discussed in terms of during and after the trafficking situation. Fear tactics did not often happen in silos – victims were often facing death threats while being beaten, or told they would be killed while also receiving threats to kill their families, etc. The following themes highlight those that were discussed most often as keeping the victim in fear both during and after their trafficking situation, though some quotes mention other tactics as well.

Emotional: Death Threats against Family

While being trafficked, victims were threatened with harm or death to their families. Family members threatened included mostly parents or children, though some mentioned other

family involved. Family members were usually in the victim's country of origin, including some children left behind by the victims in order to come to the U.S. to make money and send to them. If family members were in the U.S., it was usually children born to the victims here and, in this study, these children were conceived while they were trafficked.

Valentina discussed conceiving twice while being trafficked. For the second birth, the trafficker allowed her go to a county hospital alone to deliver the baby. She had to have an emergency caesarian section and stayed in the hospital for four days. The trafficker contacted her reminding her not to discuss anything with anyone and to notify her that someone would be waiting for her when she was released, but no one arrived to check on her. When she walked out of the hospital, someone was waiting for her, put her and her baby in a truck, and took her back to the cantina. Within a few days, the trafficker told her she needed to get back to work. When asked where the toddler was while she was hospitalized and where both kids were while she worked, Valentina stated,

> "the [trafficker's] aunt would take care of my kids. He threatened me saying that if I didn't behave and get back to work, they'd kill one of my kids."

These same tactics were used to force victims to please the male clients or not appear upset at work. Giving the appearance of a willing prostitute was important to the traffickers as it meant keeping the customers happy. Being threatened in these ways was, then, used in order to keep victims in line and keep them dependent on their trafficking situation.

Liliana was kept in debt bondage, being forced into trafficking to pay off debts that were constantly increasing. Her trafficker had told her that she owned a restaurant in Houston and would pay a smuggler to bring her. She offered Liliana a well-paying job at the restaurant saying that the smuggling cost would be paid off in the first few months and the rest was for her to keep.

When Liliana arrived, she was forced into prostitution and told she had to work off $5,000 paid to the smuggler, was charged rent by her trafficker, and daily expenses such as clothes, food, and makeup that the trafficker kept adding to the debt. Liliana had previously entered the U.S. illegally and had been deported twice within the same year she was trafficked:

> "The hardest and the most difficult time was here in Houston, because I couldn't talk to anyone. They told me to be careful when I speak to someone – because I had to do what the men told me to do. If they wanted me to hug or kiss, I had to do it. If they wanted to use drugs, I had to do it, too. If they gave me beers, I had to drink them and not throw them out. I had to take care of the clients because they were the ones that paid. And if I didn't do it, then I'd pay the consequences. And if I escaped, or if I talked to the police, she was going to kill me or harm my family. So I couldn't do anything. They would beat me and tell me that I had AIDS. They told me that I was ugly. … I had to pay for the *traida* [smuggling] – to her and to the *coyote* [smuggler]. And they wouldn't let me sleep."

Another victim, Celina, discusses the tactics of threats as so controlling that she could not accept help when offered several times. In briefly mentioning the beatings she'd receive, Celina said she could take her own risks, but not her family's. Harm to her family being the greatest risk, this threat kept her under control even at times when she could have left. In discussing how several male clients offered to help and rescue her, Celina refused many and would even argue with them because of the risks:

> [*Interviewer: You say that clients wanted to help you. Do you think they knew how to help?]* "Yes. They – a lot of them would tell me, 'I can help you. I can help report this to the police,' and all that. But that would get me into trouble – I mean, even my family

would be killed. [Clients] would tell me exactly how I could get out and how they could help, but the fear wouldn't let me."

Threatening the victims with harm to family members superseded the trafficking situation. With this fear tactic, the victim had the least control as it was not a threat or risk they took on themselves, but they were now responsible for the wellbeing of their loved ones. Because of this dynamic, the fear and responsibility felt by the victim would continue long after many respondents were removed from their trafficker.

Some respondents described how this fear remained even after they were no longer under their trafficker's control. Prosecuting cases of human trafficking can last years, especially when the trafficker is still at-large, as many of the respondents were experiencing. Not knowing where their trafficker was or what happened to them seemed to exacerbate the fear of threats to their families. Because all respondents in this study were receiving services, all had been removed from their trafficker and had agreed to participate in the investigations and prosecutions against the traffickers. Ana discussed the fear this caused her based on threats to her family made by her trafficker. Though she is from Honduras, her trafficker worked with several people to traffic her both in Mexico and the U.S. All of her belongings which she had brought from Honduras remained in Mexico and, though her trafficker was arrested, others from the trafficking network remained at-large. Ana remained fearful of the repercussions, especially knowing that the others in the network were aware that she had pressed charges and testified:

"… I changed my phone number that day. Since that day, I don't know anything about Mexico and I don't want to know anything about Mexico. Also, with my case, I had to go to court and see [trafficker]. And he knew that I was the one that pressed charges. And

that's the fear that I have because in Mexico, I have a lot of pictures of my family, a lot of my documents, and I'm scared that he's going to do something to my family."

Isabel discussed the process she had taken in the last year since she escaped her trafficking situation. Her trafficker had told her family that he was her boyfriend and told her that she had to work to support him or he would tell her family that she was working as a prostitute. He was abusive and threatened to kill her and her family. After a male client at the cantina became a regular, her trafficker threatened her not to say anything to anyone or think of leaving him. Even after the male client helped her escape, she remained fearful that something would happen to her family. At the beginning of her interview, even before speaking about her experience, she explained this fear (emphasis included is from Isabel):

> *[Interviewer: So it's about to be a year [post-trafficking]?] "*Yes. After I had the courage to leave because, let me tell you, I was – no – I *am* scared. Because he was always threatening that if he saw me talk to someone or if I left with someone else that he would harm him just like he would me. Or that he knew where my whole family lives – my uncles, my grandparents, and my mom – since he knows where they all live because he used to live there for, like, a year and a half. And that's why I'm scared, because he always threatened me. Even after I left – it'll be a year soon."

Social service providers also discussed how the victims they worked with were affected by the threats to their families post-trafficking. These threats have made it difficult for the victims to trust the investigation process and receive services. A Houston case manager (HOUCM) discussed hearing about the threats and having experienced cases where the threats were carried through:

> "I had a case [before] a while back. I met her in a detention center – a worker that was able to identify her as a trafficking victim – I went and did a screening and, sure enough, she had the potential to be a victim so I told her the process of getting help and that one of the processes was getting interviewed by law enforcement [for the investigation]. She was terrified. Once she was released from detention, I met with her twice at her home and then I made sure to reach out to her and every time we met, she was very fearful and she didn't open that much to me or [other case managers]. And then I heard back from her a year later – she was arrested again. But this time she said that she was ready. For somebody to see that you helped [them] not just once, but twice. So it took her a whole year to get services because of the fear that she had and the not understanding the process. The fear of having to talk to someone about what happened – it's like kind of ratting the trafficker out. Because the trafficker – I've heard them say, 'If you say anything, I'm not going to do anything to you – but I know where your family is so I'll go and kill them.' And they do. I've been with several cases where they have killed a family member. It's just fear for their safety and fear for their family's safety. [It doesn't allow them] to share things with us."

A Houston attorney (HOULEG) working with victims on their cases also discussed the fear for family safety. When asked what motivated them to work with victims of trafficking, HOULEG1 said:

> "…when you've worked with them and you see the fear and what they've suffered. Also the traffickers are always using – I mean they send them pictures of their family members – they threaten them. So it's really what really drives me, if I can play a small role in

providing these very vulnerable human beings who share humanity with me, in giving them a voice, to help them navigate a system."

Traffickers not only threatened victims with killing their families, but also threatened to kill them if they tried to escape or told anyone of the experience.

Emotional: Death Threats against the Victim

While being trafficked, victims faced death threats. Some of these threats were similar to the death threats against their family – not only based on harm or death, but because the victim often thought of what their death would mean to their family. Other victims stated that even if they had considered the risks, the fear was too great to follow through with trying to escape. Some victims even discussed how their traffickers killed other victims.

One victim, Micaela, discussed how her trafficker gave her a phone so that he could monitor her when she was sent to another cantina. Though she was able to move between locations on her own, her trafficker would call her with threats in case she tried to escape. She says that he eventually started to do it in a way which made her more fearful stating,

"And then he threatened me so horribly. He said he had a video on his phone of me doing something. He'd call me and do this horrible, scary voice telling me that he wanted to drink blood and eat someone's heart."

Discussing these types of calls, Micaela was asked how worried she was during the trafficking experience:

*[Interviewer: What worried you the most?] "*That they would kill me and [they would] be left alone with my kids."

Celina said she did try to think of ways to escape from day one of her trafficking experience. Like Micaela, Celina was also trafficked by a man who had a smaller network helping him

monitor the women. She was trafficked for a total of 10 years. The threats she experienced continued to increase over time, though she was told on her first day that she would be killed if she ever tried to leave:

> "I remember telling myself, 'When he turns his back,' the [trafficker], 'when he turns his back, I'm going to escape. That will be the opportunity for me to get out.' Then when he took me inside the cantina, the guard [who monitored the women] told me, 'Whoever goes out that door dies there.' So they fill your head with fear to the point that you don't want to talk to people, or tell anyone what is happening. They control your entire mind with pure threats – 'We are going to kill you,' whatever. In my experience, I arrived and that day I thought of escaping but they told me, 'When that light goes off, no one can go out that door, because once you get out, you die there.'

Celina had tried to leave or tell people what was happening a few times, but was always caught by her trafficker or his network. She says that she became rebellious, testing how far she could go in order to escape. At one point, they removed her from the cantina for a while to a nearby city because she and another victim were planning to escape. Before taking her, Celina was warned that if she did not behave, no one would notice if they killed her and her family would never know because she is undocumented:

> "He grabbed me by the neck and told me, 'I'm going to take you to [other city]. You're undocumented – who will find you? Who will know who you are? Who will come rescue you? Who, if here you aren't worth anything? You are undocumented.' So I'd think – they had blocked my mind – and I'd think, 'Well, that's true. I am undocumented. So what happens if they kill me?' So that's why I obeyed everything they told me. If they said, 'You have to go and sell yourself there,' I'd go and sell myself. Because I thought,

‘Well, if I don’t obey them, the truth is that my family will never know what happened to me.’

The worst point for Celina was a few years later when the threats became real. The other victim with whom she had planned to escape – whom she called her “only trusted friend” – was killed. The friend became pregnant and thought that this would cause the traffickers to let her go. She was happy to be having a baby and told Celina that the traffickers had to let her go so she could have the baby. She told Celina that one day she would meet a guy who would love her and her baby, marry her, and she would never tell him about this experience and would forget everything. Celina urged her not to tell the traffickers that she was pregnant, but her friend told her she would let them know so she could leave and told Celina that she would come back for her. The friend told the traffickers about her pregnancy stating that she was getting older, wanted the baby, and no men would want to have sex with her at the cantina anymore, so she asked if they’d let her leave to have her baby. They agreed and told her to wait a few more months until she was too big to work. A few months passed and eventually the friend became sick. Celina says that she suspects the traffickers drugged her friend’s food. One night her friend began to have horrible stomach pains and asked to be taken to the hospital. As they kept her waiting telling her that she’d be fine, Celina says that she immediately heard something drop and saw that her friend had miscarried. The 6-month fetus had fallen on the floor. Her friend picked up the body and screamed, asking to be taken to the doctor. The traffickers told her she’d feel better once she lied down. Her friend cleaned the body of the dead fetus and would not let go of it for a week. She told everyone the baby was alive and Celina says that she was so traumatized that it seemed like she was in a trance. After a week, the traffickers removed the body from her friend’s arms as she screamed and they forced her back to the cantina. Celina begged them to leave her

friend alone and have mercy on her. Celina and her friend were both beaten that day. In the following weeks, Celina's friend refused the clients, physically fought both clients and the traffickers, and screamed at people asking them to kill her. The traffickers told her they were tired of her, her body was worthless after the baby, she wasn't bringing in money, and she was running her mouth too much. They told her they would return her to Mexico because she was too much of a risk to stay in Houston. She hugged Celina and said,

"I hope you get out of here. I've reached my limit."

At that point, Celina said she missed her friend and was upset by what had happened the last few weeks, so she began to act up. She was worried that something bad happened, but told herself that her friend was able to get out:

> "I still had these illusions in my mind that she had escaped this, that she was worthless here so they sent her to her family – that that was the most important thing. When he [guard] returned, this guy, he tells me, 'You want to keep acting up?' and he threw a newspaper in front of me. They had tied me to a wheelchair because I was acting up and he said, 'Read the newspaper.' I just saw [the photo] – they had decapitated her. Well then. I didn't see the rest – just her face on the newspaper. I said, 'It's her. It's her.' Her name was [friend's real name]. 'It's her. It's her.' I started to cry and scream and he said, 'If you don't behave, what happened to her will happen to you.'"

One of the legal service providers talked about this system of networks and how they monitor and keep victims fearful with threats. HOULEG2 stated that keeping a network of threats made the victims feel like they could not trust anyone since they always felt watched and worried that the threats would come to pass. Giving the example of one victim who was also sent between traffickers, HOULEG2 stated that these are organized criminal networks saying,

> "It was a national prostitution ring and I feel that, it was obviously a business but also worked very much like a Mexican cartel in [how it was] instilling fear in everyone and having connections everywhere – because she [was sent] everywhere."

Some clients continued to be fearful of being killed or received threats after leaving. Several of the victims had previously escaped, but were forced or coerced into returning – many times because of the death threats. Liliana was able to get away temporarily when law enforcement had charged her trafficker with domestic violence. She had a child with her trafficker and when the police arrived on a call, Liliana's trafficker told law enforcement that they were married and just had an argument. The police told her she could press charges and they would help her. So she did, not fully understanding what the charges were. Yet with her trafficker and father of her child in jail, Liliana was left to fend for herself:

> "I pressed charges and did what I thought I could do. They gave me a lot of information and he was locked up, but then he got out on bail. I didn't have a job, I was undocumented, I didn't know how to drive, I didn't have any money, I didn't have any friends. He found me and said he wanted a chance. I told him he would never change, but he said he would for our daughter. I let him come over and that was my mistake. When he returned, one by one, [it started again]. He would step on my bare feet with boots, he'd grab me by the face and throw me on a bed, restraining me and raping me. He'd take me to the cantina every night saying if I told the cops again, we'd all end up dead. I couldn't do anything. I thought maybe [for our daughter]. He took my phone, he put a knife to my neck saying, 'Scream so the police can hear you. Tell your friends and see what happens.' I was left crying. He told me I was a dog. He took my documents. He didn't let me take showers. He beat my son."

Valentina was also able to escape at one point. She met a woman who found her on the street and offered to help her. But she was scared to ask for help and, eventually, her trafficker found her:

> "They said to go ask for help, the lady said. But I was so scared. Then a few days after I left, he started threatening me and he said if I did tell anyone, he was going to take me back there and kill me."

Valentina continued by saying this wasn't the first time she tried to escape. A client had offered to help her after she told him she was being trafficked, but her trafficker found out about it:

> "He came in and told us he was going to find out which one of us talked because if we ever opened our mouths again, he was going to kill us so we could learn not to open our mouths."

The death threats he had made then were what kept Valentina from seeking help after escaping. Yet even after finding her, her trafficker continued to threaten her with death if she reported it. She was eventually able to ask for help, but it took a while for her to receive proper services because she kept moving around between agencies, worried that he was monitoring her. At times, Valentina thought that she saw her trafficker and would panic:

> "He found me and threatened me a lot. So I returned back to that for a while because he ordered me. He was waiting for me. I had asked for help [at one agency] but he'd come looking for me. So I'd go from one place to another, so he couldn't keep monitoring me. When I would see him, I felt such a panic."

Micaela also believes that she was followed by her trafficker and their network. A male client had helped her escape and, after a while, they moved in together. When her trafficker

found her and realized that a male client at the cantina was the one who assisted her, she began to follow both Micaela and the male client.

> "A lot of things started happening to me. They flattened the tires on my car. I had also become the girlfriend of one of the clients and she didn't like that – she didn't like that risk, that I was now one of the girlfriend of one of the clients. He had found me a truck and we were paying for it together and sharing it so I didn't have to ask for rides [to work]. And then they cut the brakes on the truck. Then cars started following us back and forth from my apartment. Eventually this guy wanted to break up with me or send me back to El Salvador."

In discussing how this affects service provision, HOULEG2 discussed the complexity of the investigations and certification processes saying that the safety of victims does not receive as much attention as it should in the initial stages of victim identification and service provision. In listing several challenges attorneys face with these processes, HOULEG2 discussed the safety issue:

> "I'm not a social worker, but I know that a lot of [victims] have reported that working with their social worker here or at [another agency] was really helpful because even though their immigration status, requiring an attorney, is paramount, a lot the time what's paramount is eating and having a place to sleep and be safe so I think that part is really the most crucial – at least at the beginning. [*Interviewer: Do you mean the client is thinking about their immediate needs, when everyone else is trying* –] Right – especially with safety I mean for some of them, even if they have been rescued by law enforcement, they know that their traffickers – okay five of them are arrested but there are seventy-five still out there. So safety is a big issue for them."

As stated in some of these quotes, the threats were not only emotional but physical. Traffickers not only verbally threatened victims with death, but would physically assault them with beatings and rape.

Physical: Beatings and Rape

Physical threats or acts of abuse such as beatings and rape were discussed throughout the victims' experience of trafficking. These were used as both fear tactics of control to condition victims into their situation, and as punishment for trying to get help or escape.

Libertad, who had been trafficked more than once, discussed meeting one of her traffickers who told her he would help her get a job. At first, she thought things were going well, but then the trafficking started:

> "Everything seemed good for about a month and then he started to beat me and told me to go work because he didn't have any money. … He would beat me and tell me that I was a whore and I would never stop being one because he would always have me working for him. So I never told him anything because he would definitely hit me. … He had me working through my seventh month of pregnancy. Many times he'd just beat me and grab me by my hair, pulling hair out."

Celina was also first beaten and raped at the beginning of her trafficking situation. After arriving to an apartment, her trafficker beat her. She says that when she started to pass out,

> "[t]hat's when he raped me and he beat me, when I woke up saying, 'I didn't tell you that you could sleep!,' and he'd yell at me."

Several victims described being physically abused after trying to escape or ask for help, saying that they thought they would die from the beatings. Valentina says,

> "One time I tried to escape, but they practically killed me and beat me and then they locked me up in a room for four days. … I was so scared because they would choke me if I tried to speak up."

Isabel also discussed thinking she would die from beatings after she tried to escape:

> "They beat the shit out of me and told me that I had to go back or something worse would happen. I couldn't. I thought that I was going to die that day because blood was pouring from my nose and mouth. So I went back and they warned me to be careful with what I said to anyone. … They would leave me – well, they beat me – so they left my face looking like a monster. They gave me a mirror and said, 'That's how you want to be? Well that's how you'll stay if you don't behave. You want it the hard way, we'll give it to you hard.'"

The beatings or rape were not the only physical abuses, though they were the most common. In discussing how she was beaten and threatened with deportation, Alejandra also mentioned being drugged to calm her down. She had been trafficked in an apartment, spa, and cantina for nearly a year. Law enforcement had investigated a few times, but she never spoke up out of fear. After a few months, she said all of the abuse became too much and she risked it to be rescued:

> "They brought us by force – I even saw two [victims] that I knew from before when they deported me. They had us in Mexico as prostitutes and here they'd threaten us with deportation and would always beat us. In fact, they broke my nose because they beat us so hard. And they forced us [to sell sex] at the apartment even though we didn't want to. But after a while, you get used to it – what's happening to you becomes normal. They'd tell us that if someone arrived – the police – we had to tell them we were working like a

> spa, just a place of relaxation and say that we weren't prostitutes. Because if we said we were prostitutes, they would arrest us. But that last time [the police came], I didn't say what they told me to. I told the police the truth, 'They prostitute us here. There are the condoms,' I said everything. I was tired of it all. They used to drug us. They'd drug us and take us so we could get injections in our butts – so much was happening and I got sick of it. I was tired because they always told us that if we told anyone what was happening to us, that we were the ones that would get prosecuted. They never said something would happen to them. So I risked it all. I told my sister, 'Tell them the truth!,' because my sister was also a victim there."

The constant beatings and drugging Alejandra mentioned were paired with threats of deportation. Several victims alluded to entering the U.S. illegally or being trafficked into the U.S. and their legal immigration status was used to control them.

Legal: Threats of Deportation

The risk of deportation differs from the other threats in several ways. Deportation is not necessarily an emotional or physical act, but a threat on a person's legal status. Also, the other threats – death, beatings – were enacted by the trafficker. In threatening deportation, it seems as though the fear is not of the trafficker but of law enforcement. However, by exploiting the victims' lack of information about their legal rights, and threatening to report them, the fear of the trafficker is still the actual threat. Threats of deportation also differed in that they were most often empty threats. If a trafficker reported a victim as undocumented or a prostitute, they put themselves at risk of exposing themselves as traffickers. These threats were more often made in passing, and often in conjunction with another threat (such as death). As mentioned in previous quotations, being undocumented was used to make the victim think that if they were killed, no

one would be notified because being undocumented rendered them worthless. Valentina stated that she had been warned to follow orders by her trafficker,

> "because if I did something wrong, with just one word he would hand me over to immigration or he would have me killed."

Micaela stated that similar threats were made in passing,

> "[Trafficker] told me that he was going to call the police and he said that they would have me deported."

Though jurisdictions in cities differ as far as reporting undocumented migrants, the fear instilled in the victim was not of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, but of the police. One victim, Libertad, did, however, have a deportation order during her trafficking situation. Her trafficker, who was a U.S. citizen, used this against her repeatedly:

> "I was scared because I had a deportation order, so my fear was that if they got a hold of me, they would deport me and take away my baby. … When he started to blackmail me, he said that he knew that I [was undocumented] and that they couldn't do anything to him since he [had legal status]."

As exemplified by these experiences, many fear tactics used against victims either kept them in their situation, fearful of speaking up against their trafficker, or wary of trusting service providers. However, victims were not the only ones subject to traffickers' threats and fear tactics. Traffickers not only tried to control the victims, but controlled the trafficking situation entirely, which would include the male clients who purchased sex.

Traffickers vs. Clients

Fear was discussed in two ways when victims discussed the men who came to buy sex at the cantinas. First, victims discussed being scared to be with certain male clients. This varied due

to not wanting to have sex with strangers or because some male clients were abusive. Secondly, along with threats to the victims, traffickers were known to beat or make death threats against the male clients who got too involved with a victim. This kept the victim fearful of disclosing too much, but some victims discussed the fear that the male clients also had of the traffickers. The male clients ran great risks if they found out too much information about the trafficking situation of the victim.

Fearing the Male Clients

Ana discussed the constant state of fear which she said she felt daily. When asked if this was due to the threats she experienced or because she didn't know who would come to the cantina that day, she stated both had an effect on her:

> "One part of it was that I was scared of [trafficker], another part was of the clients. When [trafficker] was forcing me to do those things, then I'd be scared of the client."

She stated that her fear was based on being forced to do what the trafficker had her do, which meant having sex with strangers.

Celina recalled that a client had abused her. When asked how this affected her, she blamed her trafficker. She stated that whatever she went through was not because of the clients, but of the traffickers who forced her to do it. When asked what she most feared, she said,

> "Well the [trafficker]. The client was just, like, you pay and you go. I'll tell you that I did have abusive clients, but no – I saw that as minor from what I went through with the [traffickers]."

Attorneys working with the victims also brought up the fear victims share during their cases and how it differs between their traffickers and the clients (also called johns). HOULEG3 discussed what victims will share:

> "Usually they don't really want to talk about [traffickers] that much, either, because they're scared or don't want to remember. … They don't really talk much about the johns, either, unless it is a particular one. But I think they won't talk about them day to day – they're just a customer, but the ones that stand out they'll talk about. … I think the trafficker is the bigger threat. … I'm sure that they probably do get mistreated as well during the course of their work, but think once [johns] leave, I don't think they see the johns as threats because it's kind of just business to johns."

HOULEG1 shared similar experiences in working with victims who remained fearful post-trafficking. In discussing what was lacking in services, prevention training on how not to fall back into a cycle for repeated trafficking was discussed. This led to a discussion on how HOULEG1 sees the true threat to the victims is the traffickers, though others blame the johns:

> "…it's not because we don't care [who the johns are], it's because we try to concentrate on the elements and the factors that will help [victims] get their [certification] status because that is at the core of what we do. … [*Interviewer: Are you saying that when you speak with victims individually, if they discuss any trauma, it's the trafficker?*] Yes, and that's usually because lots of times they don't see that the customer – they see them as a customer, and that they really didn't do anything bad; that this is offered to them and they accepted. But the ones that put them in the situations and beat them up if they don't do it, and impregnate them – I had several of them forced into aborting their children. So it's always those who are controlling them that they talk about: This is the fear. This is what they want to escape. This is what we want to protect them from because they are the ones putting them in the way of the others. I always felt that all the resentment – not that they like it – I don't think that's where their anger or resentment is. [*Interviewer: Do you*

mean the experience with johns wasn't like the experience with the traffickers?] It's the way I understood it from [victims]. Again, I can't really put myself in their place. But what they felt was that they were subjected to accept things they wouldn't really have accepted [on their own]. Having men do things to them, they wouldn't have accepted, but they kind of felt that it was because the traffickers put them in that situation and subjected them to it more than these men themselves."

Risks for Clients

Whether or not the male clients knew that the women were trafficking victims, they were careful of getting too involved at the risk of being threatened by the traffickers. The male clients' own risks with the traffickers was discussed when they talked about whether or not they would help a trafficking victim. However, even though male clients are aware that they are being watched when they're with the women, that some women are scared or cry, and that they are threatened as well, it is not understood that these are indicators of a trafficking situation. Rather, these are seen as risks that are part of the illicit environment or because of the woman's immigrant/romantic/smuggling situation as a whole.

One of the male clients, Poncho, mentioned that he no longer goes to cantinas at night because the environment changes and he feels there is more surveillance:

"Why do you think I don't go at night? Because I know that they get bad. I watch and I can take care of myself, but at night it's the most dangerous. … We don't have any idea until it happens to us. Yeah, I don't wish it on anyone to go through that. And some men also get pushed through there. They adapt because they got too involved and now they're controlled by threats. They tell them, 'Do as we say or you know what awaits you.' … I just try to find places where I can [buy sex], but I don't like those. [*Interviewer: What*

don't you like?] How it goes. There's no freedom when moving in that environment. The client runs a lot of risks, too. [*Interviewer: How?*] Well, now you've gotten involved in it without wanting to. Because you saw something and right there they can wait for you when you leave, or in the street, or they threaten you, or they make you join them, or they kill you. [*Interviewer: Why?*] Because you saw something and it threatens them if you can go report them – that you go and tell someone else later. It aggravates them. Like everyone who wants to cover the sun with their thumb, they don't want the anyone to know. But I know how it is. … As a human being, I don't like it because it shouldn't be like that."

Israel also discussed these risks, though he did not state that he had personally experienced any. Even though he stated that the women he met in cantinas did not mention that they were trafficked and that he did not think he had come across victims, he did say that there were threats and risks:

[*Interviewer: Do you think the men who go to the cantinas where this happens are capable of helping?*] "Yes, I think so. Look, I'm not someone who feels badly about defending a woman, because if I saw one of these cases, then it would anger me in my heart. No one should be harming any woman – to the contrary. [*Interviewer: What would you do?*] To defend a woman – if it's not by her own will – then I'd defend her against what they are doing to her. It is the most logical thing to do. But if they had guns, well then, it's best not to do anything because then you could be the victim, too, or cause problems or something will happen to you, too. [*Interviewer: … Would you know how to help?*] No. But first I'd call the police, the authorities, because they're the ones that can assist these cases. Not just anyone because one has more risks than a police officer. A

police officer is more respected and can free a victim, but if a man does it without authority, then there's no respect and something bad could happen to them. [*Interviewer: Do you trust calling the police?*] Yes, of course. Yes, because I'm not doing anything bad – I'm doing something good, helping out another person because they're in a problem and they could be a victim – they could be dead tomorrow morning and I could have done something but I didn't – that would remain on my conscience."

Emiliano discussed times when women that he met in cantinas started to cry or told him they did not want to have sex. He believed the women weren't happy with their situation, but he says that none told him they were forced or threatened into it. Either way, he knew that there were risks for both of them because they are monitored by someone during the time for which he paid. When asked what he would have to see or be told to know that a woman was a victim of sex trafficking, he said:

"Telling someone the truth of what's happening. [*Interviewer: She would have to confess it?*] Yes because you can't get yourself into problems or situations just because you want to or make something up like, 'Hey, you're selling that chick!' What if they shoot you right there? [*Interviewer: So it's a risk for you?*] Yeah and also, what if you already have other risks? You get me? Like you're from the streets?"

Emiliano was a former gang member and had previous problems with the law. Though he was worried about getting involved in more problems, he said that he would risk it if he could help someone. He discussed a time that he helped rescue a young girl – about 14 years old – when he a guy was selling her. He had paid for a woman to be brought to his apartment for sex, but the pimp had arrived with a girl he knew was a minor. When left alone, he immediately got her a change of clothes and took her to meet up with friends who helped him take her to someone he

knew helped young women in San Antonio. Emiliano had been threatened by the trafficker until he told the trafficker that it was a felony. After discussing that instance, he said it was wrong to sell children and he would risk what could happen to him to save her saying,

> "Like that girl – that little kid, I helped her immediately. I told her, 'There's no chance for you here. Let's go before this guy comes in 15 minutes [paid time]!,' because can you imagine? He was also going to fuck me up!"

As discussed by Emiliano and previous quotes from victims, male clients who do help victims escape their trafficking situation also receive threats after the fact. Celina, said that after a male client helped her escape, he tried to appease the traffickers by paying them her supposed debt, but it didn't stop the threats. She says,

> "My husband was threatened a lot. Even though he paid them $800, they broke all the windows on his car."

Discussion

The most common theme that arose from this study was the victims' fear of the traffickers. The initial intention of this article was to explore and give only the victims' perspective on the trafficking experience and how to best assist them in rescue and rehabilitation. Though only victims were asked about their trafficking experience, all stakeholders discussed how they were affected by the fear tactics by the traffickers. Victims explained how this fear kept them in their trafficking situation and how they remain affected by fear post-trafficking. Service providers discussed how this fear affected service provision in working with victims. Male clients discussed indicators of this fear as well as their own fear of the traffickers. Though traffickers used fear tactics such as teaching victims to fear law enforcement to keep victims under their control, the vast majority of fear discussed was of the trafficker. Therefore, victims

were coerced to remain in their situation with a trafficker whom they feared because the trafficker would cause them to fear investigators. Because of this, victims became dependent on their trafficker, no matter how much they feared them. Fearing the traffickers, thus, hindered proper victim identification, rescue, and service provision.

In keeping a foreign-born Latina trafficking victim in their situation, the trafficker had to control them in different ways – emotionally, physically, and legally. The degree of fear felt by victims during and after their trafficking experience did not often change simply by being removed from their trafficker. Whether they had reason to continue fearing the traffickers, such as their still being at-large, did not cause the fear to subside. Victims continued to feel the effects of the threats long after their identification and rescue. This degree of fear, remaining long after the situation is done, continued to affect their rehabilitative process by not allowing them to trust law enforcement and attorneys with their investigation, not allowing case managers to properly help them identify social services, and in the victims' own daily functioning and personal lives.

Whereas the experiences with male clients they were forced to sleep with, for the most part, had a negative effect on them physically and emotionally, the fact that this happened to them because of a trafficker is being neglected in current campaigns and policies. Among all respondents (victims, SSPs, male clients), the difference between the trafficker and the clients was distinct. When asked to clarify who they saw as the trafficker, all respondents – victims, service providers, and men purchasing sex – discussed the men or women who forced the victim into sex work. A trafficker is a constant and, very often, life-threatening source of the victims' fear. Male clients varied and did not collectively, or even individually, pose a threat which keep the client under constant fear as the trafficker did. During data analysis, the research team found differences in how the victims reacted when discussing their trafficker versus how they discussed

the male clients. In discussing the traffickers, victims often seemed distraught, scared, or would cry or speak with a cracked voice. When discussing the men they slept with during their trafficking situation, victims spoke more matter-of-factly and only appeared upset when discussing some male clients who were rough or abusive.

Implications for Policy

Current policies and campaigns focusing their attention on the men purchasing sex make too many assumptions to serve the victims well. In assuming that men who buy sex are demanding victims of sex trafficking and are, therefore, the greatest threat to the victims, the actual traffickers and criminals have become a secondary character in the act of trafficking. As Hughes's supply and demand for trafficking model ignores the victims, current Stop the Demand policies have also ignored the victims' experience which is far more fearful of their trafficker than of the men their trafficker forces them to be with. These policies focus already limited resources on investigating, arresting, and prosecuting men for purchasing sex rather than on the people causing the trafficking experience.

A new perspective on who is to blame, and properly investigating and prosecuting in order to prevent and protect victims from trafficking is needed, in addition to assessing the prevention and prosecution prongs of future reauthorizations of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. Municipal, state, and federal sting operations which target the men purchasing sex need reassessment in regards to where the resources are going and if they are actually helping us identify and rescue more victims.

Chapter 4: Conclusion/Discussion

To the researcher's knowledge, this is the first study that has focused on various stakeholders of Latino sex networks as they relate to international sex trafficking. Since its inception, the federal policy meant to protect victims, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, has undergone continuous assessment and reauthorizing in order to impede the trafficking of persons. Yet as the focus has shifted to prosecution, difficulties in identifying the victims and their needs have become afterthoughts in the pursuit of holding someone accountable. Because human trafficking is a global problem, the exploration and understanding of how it is affected by cultural, community, and historical nuances is vital in properly identifying the myriad of victims and assisting them in their restoration.

This study and its ensuing articles focus on a particular population, network, and setting which have not previously been accessed by many researchers or policy analysts. What's more, the study focused on the Latino sex networks as a whole, understanding that those affected do not operate in silos. The study did not focus on the perceptions of one stakeholder whose experience would only reflect one side of the policies explored. Although the researcher did seek to give the individual experiences of stakeholders in each article, the qualitative data emerging continuously reflected the synergy of the experiences shared by the male clients, the service providers, and the victims.

Limitations

As stated, this investigation focused on Latino sex networks in Houston as affected by sex trafficking. The nuances explored and policy implications are limited to these networks and should not be generalized among all victims of sex trafficking. However, because this group

represents a vulnerable and hidden population who are at a disadvantage in the face of currently enacted anti-trafficking policies and campaigns, their experiences should be considered for equality purposes in policy analysis.

Other limitations of this study affected access to the hidden populations represented. Mentioned as ethical concerns in the articles, the primary researcher volunteered with anti-trafficking agencies in Houston and knew one of the participants prior to the study. Interview and sampling design measures were taken in order to reduce bias. Because the male clients and victim groups are vulnerable and hidden populations, and the study explored a specific network, snowball sampling was used. The primary researcher had earned the trust of agencies and these sample groups in Houston. This was not the case in Los Angeles where the researcher was unable to interview Latina victims either at the trafficking-specific agency represented in the study or other agencies which the researcher was not able to access (regardless of the low number of Latina victims respondents stated were enrolled in the agencies). Therefore the Latino sex networks represented in the study are limited to Houston and cannot be compared to Latino sex networks in Los Angeles.

Another limitation was the risks in recruiting male client respondents. Recruiting this sample was difficult as men did not want to disclose intimate details or information of illicit activity. Also, seven male clients were withdrawn from the study due to either their perceived risk of deportation or for safety reasons of the primary researcher.

Recommendations for Social Work

Research into how certain cultures, networks, and hidden populations are impacted by human trafficking is vital in order to create effective policies, properly identify victims, improve

service provision, and address the causes and risks of exploitation. Exploring and working with these hidden networks and populations and gaining a better understanding of their culture can also reveal ignored stakeholders and potential allies in anti-trafficking efforts.

The international sex trade is an ancient phenomenon that only grows with industrialization and the demand for commoditized sex acts. Inconsistent policies, incongruent cultural values, and approaches focused on naming, blaming, or shaming have done little to effectively identify, rescue and assist actual victims. Victims have thus been rendered nameless and faceless causes and combative efforts are considered to be the responsibility of those on the front-lines. However, as proven by several Houston cantina cases, help may be found in the trenches if customers are willing participants in identifying victims and victims are more recognizable as such rather than as willing sex workers.

Anti-trafficking policies and efforts which focus on prosecution render the process of victim identification and restoration difficult for the victim to access. Stop the Demand efforts do not properly delineate between victims of sex trafficking and willing prostitutes. Similarly, it does not distinguish between male clients of sex and those actually trafficking the victims. These distinctions are vital in order to properly identify victims and the men who could help in anti-trafficking efforts.

Foreign-born Latinas who are trafficked for sex face many traumatic events. With the burden of proof being on such victims, who are already vulnerable and scared to self-identify, other roles in the network should be assessed to determine how others can help identify and assist them. The experiences of the three sample groups in this study depict the unique risks they face due to trafficking in Latino sex networks while highlighting the strengths and contributions each makes in identifying sex trafficking. Current anti-trafficking policies and efforts which only

allow for certification in return for cooperation with the prosecution of traffickers should expand to include other stakeholders who can share the burden of proof with the victim. Prevention measures should also be more inclusive by expanding outreach, education, and awareness efforts to all involved, including the men, and targeting their unique access to the networks and potential victims. The male clients have been criminalized as perpetrators though many in Latino sex networks have shown to be willing to help conclusively identify victims once they are aware of human trafficking. Because they are stakeholders who also face risks from traffickers in the sex trade, male clients could also be allies in the fight against sex trafficking.

Training service providers in proper victim identification and how to best assist in restoration is crucial in creating competent social workers, law enforcement, and other service providers. This competency could increase the number of victims identified and assisted as they work towards rebuilding their lives as well as empower more victims to self-report and seek services when they see safe and competent systems as an option. However, funding for and providing proper services for victims of sex trafficking is still lacking. Though service providers may be competent in assisting victims of sex trafficking, there is little they can do if the proper services, such as safe housing or bilingual service provision, are unavailable.

Those most affected by sex trafficking in Latino sex networks and improper victim identification are the victims. When men who have helped identify victims are criminalized, the victims are impacted as well as the men. Likewise, when service providers are unable to identify them or they are not able to offer them necessary resources, victims are the most impacted. The trauma and fear which the victims faced at the hands of their traffickers remains long after victim identification and removal from their trafficking situation. Further research and policy analyses

are necessary in order to understand these experiences and needs in order to create a system that focuses on the victim.

Anti-trafficking efforts cannot rely on answers which blanket all people involved in this global blight. In social work and fields that value social justice, identifying the victim is critical in defining and fighting the injustice they face. So far, anti-trafficking efforts have been counterintuitive by fighting the issue without properly defining who is affected and how. Efforts such as sting operations which prosecute men soliciting prostitutes have used resources meant to address sex trafficking, even though we know that a sex trafficking victim and a willing prostitute are legally two different populations. Yet while these efforts increase, the limited quantitative data we have has shown that actual victims of trafficking go unidentified. Victim identification must be further studied and emphasized in anti-trafficking efforts. If not, we will continue to fight for a population whom we know nothing about and will continue to impose our laws, definitions, values, and causes on unidentified victims.

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